

Travels with Stanley: On the road with hockey's hallowed hardware

The Sporting News

See a Different Game

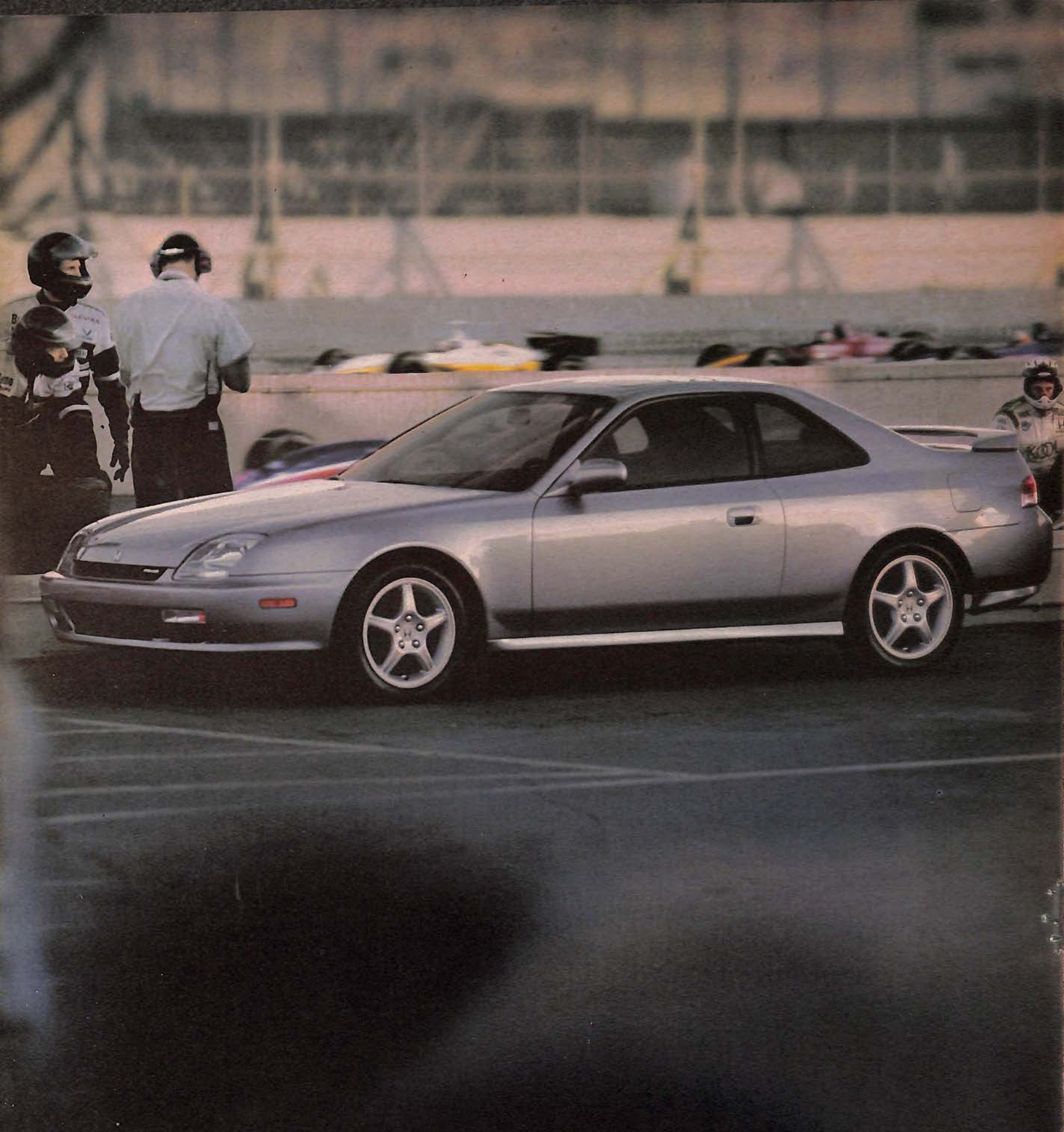
Did the D-backs' **BIG DEAL** put them **OVER THE TOP?**

Plus: Other trade deadline winners ... and losers

SNAKES **ALIVE!**

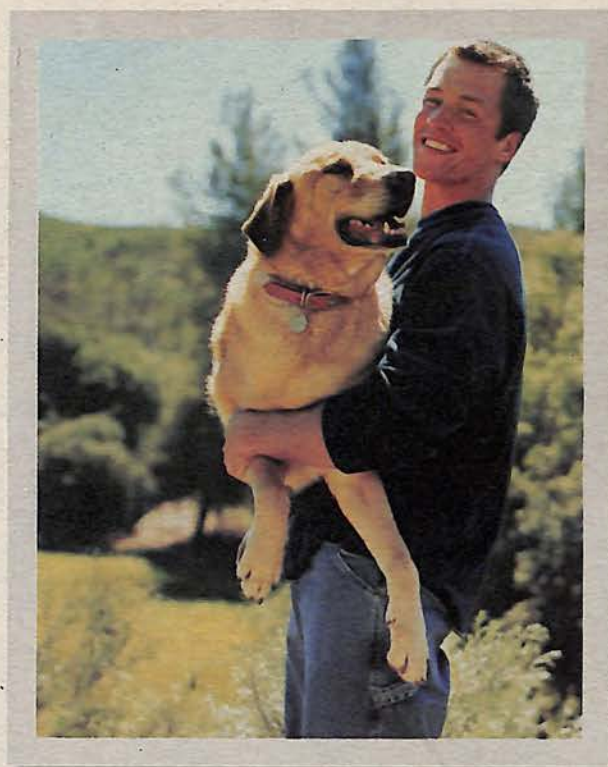
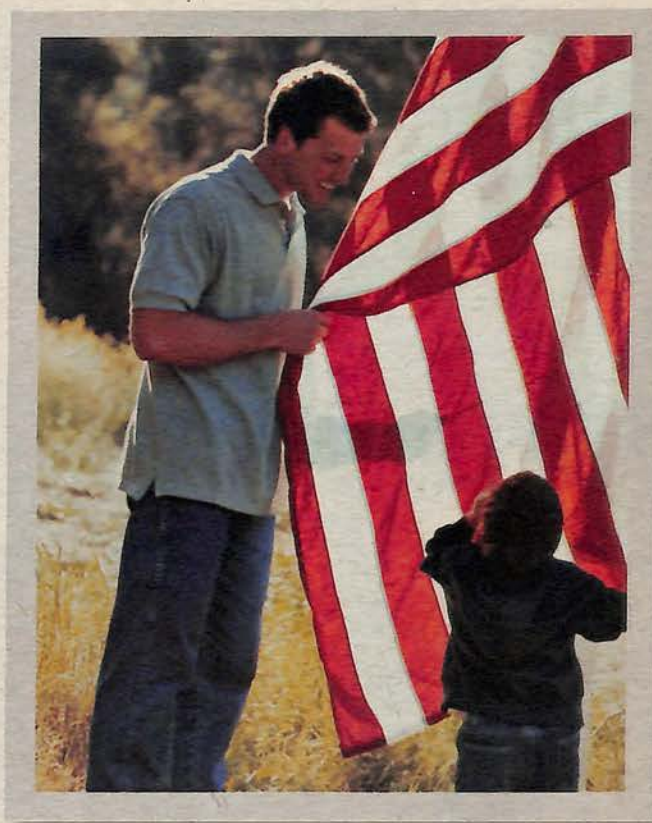
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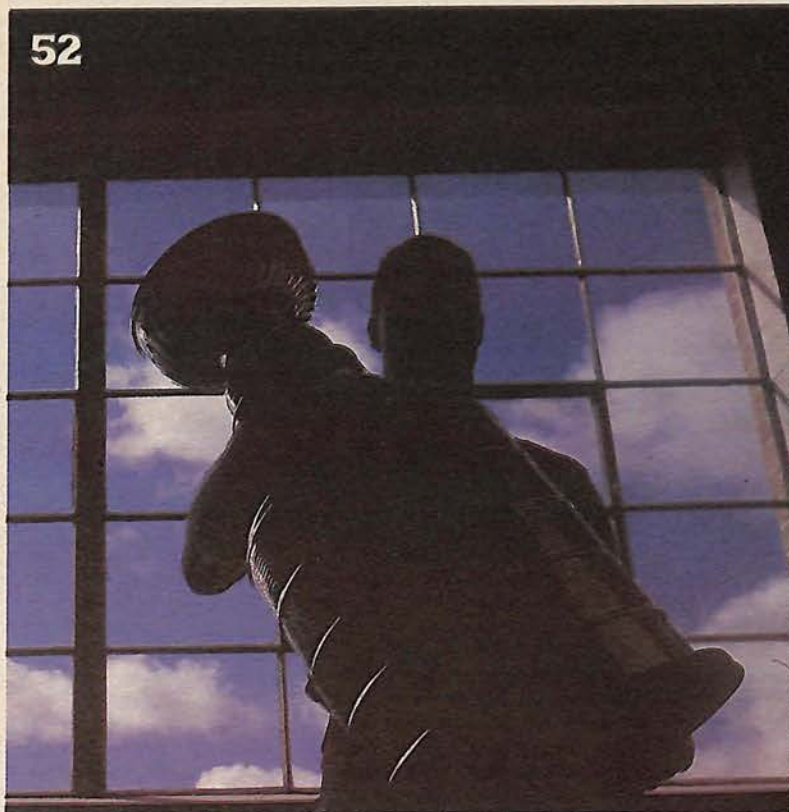
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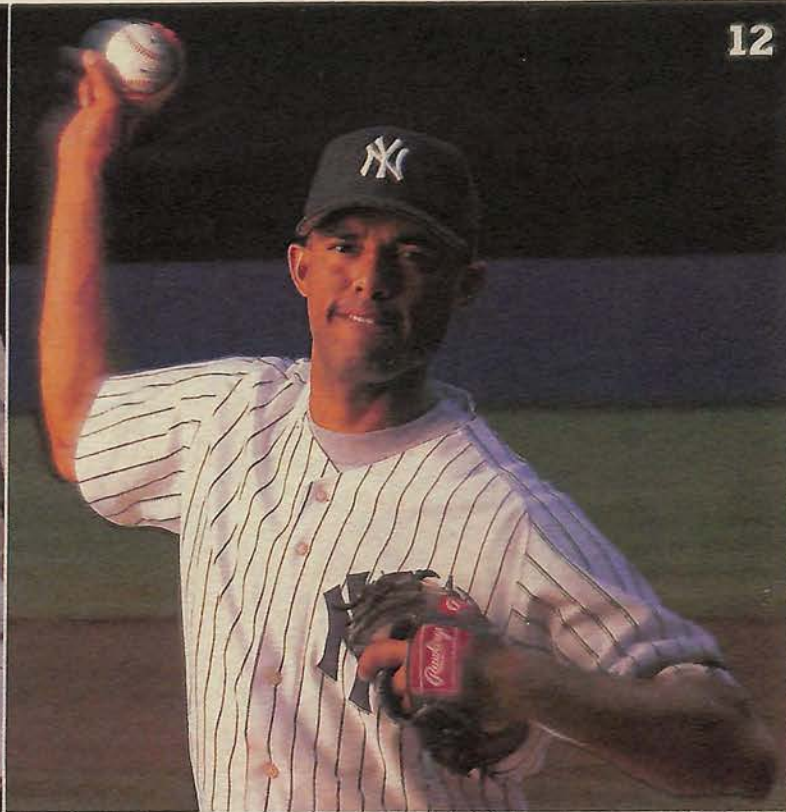
A man with short brown hair is sitting on a rustic wooden chair outdoors. He is wearing a light grey polo shirt and blue jeans, and is barefoot. He is smiling at the camera. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with trees and foliage. The text "as real as" is in a small, white, sans-serif font, and "Wrangler" is in a large, bold, red, sans-serif font with a registered trademark symbol. The text is overlaid on the man's torso and legs.

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Closer to fine

After three years, even standout closers must adjust—or start looking for another job.

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COVER PHOTO OF CURT SCHILLING BY ELIOT J. SCHECHTER FOR TSN.
THIS PAGE, FROM LEFT: SCOTT STEVENS WITH THE STANLEY CUP BY DILIP VISHWANATH / TSN; MARIANO RIVERA BY ROBERT SEALE / TSN.



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From the Editor

Cup chronicles

There are few givens in sports, but I know this: No trophy has the history, character and mileage of the Stanley Cup. Because of the unique tradition that allows each member of the winning team to have the Cup for a day, managing editor Paul Grant dispatched senior writer Larry Wigge to bring the celebration to you. I know you'll like reading Larry's account, beginning on page 52, nearly as much as he enjoyed reporting it.

"What I found most interesting was the reactions of people around this great trophy," Larry says. "From the fun-loving eating popcorn out of the Cup while watching the movie *The Kid*, to playing street hockey for the trophy outside of Montreal by Martin Brodeur

and his boyhood chums, to the reverence paid the Cup by Scott Stevens, who refused to play a round of golf with me for it. I've seen people line up to view, touch and have pictures taken with it at the All-Star Game and during the finals. But this was much different, especially when you think how hard these players perform to win a few minutes or hours with the trophy."

Larry relays one anecdote that tells a lot about the Cup and the reverence in which it is held. The setting is the first floor of the Kitchener Auditorium as security guards sneak the Cup in the side door. "The Cup is packaged in a steel container on wheels that has to weigh about 80 pounds," he says. "As we made one turn, a team of 14-year-old

Rollerbladers came flying around the corner and nearly collided with the container. Once they realized what was in it, they froze. The shouts of young athletes turned silent—almost like they had just entered church. I'll bet those guys have never been so quiet as a group in their lives. But being in the presence of the Cup changes the way people act.

"Everyone should have an opportunity to view the Cup on one of these team tours. Totally a heart-warming experience."

John Rawlings

E-mail John Rawlings at jrawlings@sportingnews.com

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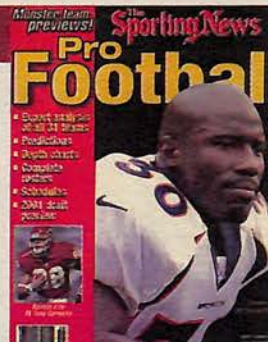
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Voice of the Fan

Choice voice 'The DH allows headhunters like Roger Clemens to get away with attempted murder. If there were no DH in the A.L., Clemens never would have the guts to bean Mike Piazza simply because he would know what comes next.'

—John T. Feret, New York

Thanks for Kindred

I read the baseball section in this week's issue (TSN, July 24) and saw that this once-proud publication took not one, but two, cheap shots at Anaheim pitcher Tim Lincecum. It should be pointed out that Belcher has made only four appearances this year and is on the D.L. (since July 3). I don't recall Belcher

ever bragging or claiming he was a higher-echelon major league pitcher, so why the condescending attitude?

You should thank the Lord daily that a noble voice like Dave Kindred still brings dignity and appreciation for all professional athletes!

Eric Pfirman
Statesville, N.C.

North Dakota proud

Thanks for Chris Jenkins' excellent profile of Angels outfielder Darin Erstad (TSN, July 24). I think kids looking for a baseball role model need look no further. Erstad respects the game and plays with intensity. When things don't go right, he doesn't duck anything.

Erstad grew up about 90 minutes from here and has our North Dakota work ethic. We're proud to say he's one of us.

Francis Materi
Wishek, N.D.

Great draft coverage

Kudos to TSN on your coverage of the NBA draft. I thoroughly enjoyed reading the pre-draft issue, which noted each team's needs and predicted the selections. Your website coverage was phenomenal as well.

This exceptional coverage comes on the heels of the best coverage of the NFL draft.

I currently subscribe to three sports magazines. I have been contemplating whether to renew any or all of them. Your recent draft coverage has persuaded me to keep TSN.

John Ginn
Acworth, Ga.

Speaking of rants

Dennis Miller may be the king of the rant on cable television, but his fans went on tirades of their own when Paul Attner attacked the decision to add Miller to *Monday Night Football* (TSN, July 24).

"Nobody believed that pro hockey could survive in warm-weather cities, and they were wrong! Many people said the wild card wouldn't make it in baseball. They were wrong, too," writes Donovan Klein of Mandan, N.D. "I say let's give Miller a chance."

Nick Agrait of Brooklyn, N.Y., has more faith in Miller than in NFL fans. He writes: "Dennis Miller an insult to American fans' intelligence? These are the same fans who vote yes on referendums to build new stadiums with public money so millionaires can make more money, and who buy seat licenses so they can have the right to be gouged for season tickets."

Attner also has his supporters. "I am only one of thousands who fall into the category of a hard-core football fan," Jerry Kastler of Northridge, Calif., writes. "I also felt, among other things, very insulted with the announcement of the broadcast team."

Got a comment? THE SPORTING NEWS would love to hear from you. Write Voice of the Fan, 10176 Corporate Square Drive, Suite 200, St. Louis, MO 63132, fax your message to us at 314-997-0765, or send us electronic mail at tsnmail@sportingnews.com. Be sure to include your name and city with your e-mail. THE SPORTING NEWS reserves the right to edit letters for brevity and content.

Did You Know?

Ali predicted his classic bout against Frazier would be "no contest!"

On March 8, 1971, Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier squared off in center ring at the historic Madison Square Garden in New York City. The 15 round bout would not only be one of the greatest boxing events in history, but also one of the most extraordinary sporting events of the 20th century.

Smokin' Joe Frazier was the heavyweight champ. Ali had been stripped of his title because of his refusal to join the armed forces. There was more at stake than the heavyweight title. In the post-Vietnam era, the country was culturally divided and each fighter had distinctly different political and social beliefs. However, Frazier, a pro-war conservative and Ali, who opposed the war, had one thing in common...they were both undefeated. Both fighters displayed the mental discipline, grace and courage necessary to be champ, but only one would triumph.

Ali v. Frazier will eternally be known as "The Fight of the Century." On August 17, HBO relives this boxing phenomenon in a one-hour documentary "Ali-Frazier I: One Nation...Divisible."

August 17

Ali-Frazier I: One Nation...Divisible

10 PM/9C

Sports
of the 20th
Century

HBO

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Caught on the Fly



Hey, didn't you used to be an A.L. West contender?

■ Yep, you bet, the stRangers can finish dead-fanny last with or without MVPudge, but Fly hears the team's kid pitchers're relieved they'll hear **Billy Haselman's** hands-on approach instead of Rodriguez's (after)thoughts. Whispers one young gun: "Pudge won't have to spend time worrying about us."

■ Speaking of Texas, any buzz about **Juan Gone** comin' back-back-back (**Raffie-n-Pudge's** campaignin' aside) doesn't take into account smolderin' bridges left not by Igor but members of his entourage. Translation: May as well dream about **Nolan Ryan** in the '01 rotation.

■ **Marshall Faulk's** buffer than ever in Rams camp, the Spies say. Good thing, because there's *mucho* OTJ training to be done along the O-line, a unit hardest hit (insert "**Kurt Warner's** backside" reference here) this offseason.

■ Fly Top 5 or "If this conference really had 10 teams (and no grand juries to worry about), that'd be a 50 percent top-notch QB rating":

1. **Drew Brees;**
2. **Drew Henson;**
3. **Antwaan Randle El;**
4. **Kurt Kittner;**
5. **Rashard Casey.**

■ Only thing standin' between **Jerry West** and his AARP club meetings was this free-agent season. Sure as August 1's come-n-gone, he's hiss-toe-ree. Proof the time's right? During his annual post-playoffs fishing trip/retirement soul-search in Alaska, the Lakes never once crossed his mind.



KEITH SEIDEL FOR TSN

DONE IN L.A.: This summer, West felt just peachy on a lake full of fish not fretting about the Lakers.

"That," he admits, "was the first time in 40 years that happened."

■ Nope, the Spies say, yer not imaginin' thangs. **Mike Bishop's** gettin' more snaps with the Pats. **Bill Belichick**, they whisper, won't suffer the same criticism his predecessor did, for **Pete's** sake. Plus a coach has gotta know if the Kiddie QB's legit or a product-o-mopup vs. scrubeenies.

■ Fresh from the Rumorama, where they

excel at matching exits (not entrees) with whines: **Davey J** quits/retires/is fired as Dodgers skip, **Bobby V** blows Flushing for L.A., **Dusty Baker** pulls a coast-to-coast to join the Mets, and **Felipe Alou** dials up PacBell.

■ Speaking of the Dodgers, the Spies see only one thing wrong with **Kevin Malone's** panic reacquisition of **Ismael Valdes**: There's still no known cure for Tin Man's Disease. (Please

give generously to stamp out lack-o-heart in our lifetime.)

■ Now that the Bulls have struck out with top-shelf free agents, the Spies say four things're abso-freakin'-lutely clear: 1. Chicago ain't the problem; 2. Cash ain't the problem; 3. **Jerry Krause** is the problem. Total 'em up and here's the bottom line: This remodeling job's gonna take a lot longer than planned.

■ Finally, the Spies say there's no better epitaph for **Schill** as a Phil than the running joke among team worker bees on the fourth floor of the Vet: "If he wasn't our horse, he'd be our horse's rear end."

Need a daily fix-o-Fly? Click on sportingnews.com.

Bob Hille's Starting Five

1 The Curt Schilling trade. To its credit, the Phillies front office refused to sit by and do nothing—unlike the players in roughly six of every 10 games.

2 The Pro Football Hall of Fame. The players, all of whom had ties to the Raiders or 49ers, were given a bust of themselves. Bay Area fans, meantime, will be presented later with a bust of a season.

3 The return of Frank Kush. The nonsense former Arizona State football coach has rejoined the athletic department. The first hint he meant business: The secretary had to drop and give him 50.

4 Steve Spurrier. He's promising a kinder, gentler persona. Or from his frame of reference, think in terms of New Testament vs. Old Testament.

5 Pat Summerall's retirement. His one concession in his farewell season: He'll have a spotter help him misidentify players.

DUSTBIN

August 8, 1992

With the greatest collection of basketball talent ever assembled, the United States waxed Croatia, 117-85, for the men's basketball gold medal at the 1992 Olympics. For the first time, the U.S. men's team featured NBA players, and the squad trampled the competition by an average of 43.8 points a game. Chuck Daly coached the squad, dubbed "The Dream Team." It consisted of Magic Johnson, Michael Jordan, Larry Bird, Charles Barkley, David Robinson, Scottie Pippen, Patrick Ewing, Karl Malone, John Stockton, Chris Mullin, Clyde Drexler and Christian Laettner, whose college eligibility had expired earlier in the summer. The '92 Games weren't a one-time "exhibition" of U.S. hoops' might. An All-NBA Dream Team easily won the '96 gold medal, and another Dream Team will compete this September in Sydney.



AP PHOTO / SUSAN RAGAN

DEFT SHOT

'We met the band and had a few beers with them backstage. They all travel in rough ol' buses and sleep in bunks, one on top of the other, going from gig to gig every night. The Cup schedule is tough, but after seeing that, I'm not sure I'd trade places with those guys.'

NASCAR's Dale Earnhardt Jr. on spending time with Third Eye Blind, his favorite band.



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Three and out?

After a few seasons, closers have to make adjustments—or start looking for a new job

By Bob McCullough Photo By Robert Seale

They shoot up from the minors like rockets, blowing fastballs by dazzled batters in pressure situations. As the saves add up and opponents adjust, most young closers begin to throw a second pitch, a slider or curve designed to keep hitters off the fastball. By the time their third year rolls around, the best of the best are considered unhittable.

But the baseball laws of physics still apply: What goes up can come down in a hurry.

Whether they get waylaid by injuries, pressure or the confidence aftershocks from a bad season, closers are baseball's answer to mayflies when it comes to longevity. Backup catchers and left-handed specialists have the job security of civil servants, but most closers have a three-year run, followed by an agonizing slide that usually lasts a season or two. Sometimes they're able to resurrect their careers, but they usually re-emerge as shadows of their youthful selves, relying on craft and guile rather than sheer speed.

"Closers become more problematic because of the demands of that position and the lack of pitchers that are capable of becoming closers," says Astros G.M. Gerry Hunsicker. "So to me, you constantly in the back of your mind have to be looking for a closer and anticipating that you may need to fill that void at any time. It's very difficult to count on a closer."

This year, Hunsicker found out just how difficult. Houston's coming-out party for Enron Field turned into a going-out party for opposing hitters when Billy Wagner's elbow problems turned an otherwise suspect bullpen into a minefield of mediocrity.

Other current casualties of the "three and out" rule are no less noteworthy:

- In Atlanta, John Rocker's inability to control his mouth or his stuff helped open the door for the Mets to get back in the N.L. East chase and forced the Braves to go with a bullpen-by-committee.

- The Diamondbacks have filled in for struggling Matt Mantei with young and inconsistent Byung-Hyun Kim, and though Mantei has been better lately, his unsightly 6.84 ERA remains a sobering hangover from 1999.

- Ugueth Urbina's season-ending arm woes may have kept a talented Expos squad from a playoff run.

"The shelf life of someone (closing) is normally short," says Yankees G.M. Brian Cashman. "Closers don't have a margin for error. If they lose something, whether it's because of injury or just giving it your 110 percent over a three-, four-year period, maybe the gas tank gets a little low, and all of

a sudden you're not the same pitcher.

"I would expect maybe every four years, you have to recycle a guy and find someone new."

If the Yankees decided to recycle closers, the guy they'd be saying goodbye to would be Mariano Rivera, who may in fact be edging toward the end of a great run. A couple of potential indicators already have surfaced, the most significant being age. Rivera turned 30 before the season, and few closers who make a living off their fastball survive long as thirtysomethings.

The second harbinger is Rivera's ERA, which remains over three runs a game. A paltry number in the current long-ball era, to be sure, but Rivera has been under 2.00 the past three years, and a rising ERA is usually the first thunderhead beyond the sunshine of a steady save rate. With two months still to play, Rivera already has allowed more runs than he did all last season.

If Rivera slips from future Hall of Fame super-closer to mere run-of-the-mill All-Star, his slide would present the Yankees with a vexing conundrum. Do they reward him for his crucial role in their three-title run and saddle themselves with a contract that could become a fiscal albatross? Or do they repeat the choice they made in 1996 with John Wetteland and let Rivera hit the road, this time without a reliable successor?

"I don't have control over those things," Rivera says. "You can't go out there and pitch and think about, 'OK, I want them to sign me.' I think injuries are the biggest thing (longevity issue). With injuries, you don't control it—it just comes and you deal with it."

Rivera, who is making \$7.25 million this season, is not eligible to be a free agent until after the 2001 season. Though Cashman recognizes the possibility that Rivera's time at the top is running out, the Yankees want him around for a long time.

"We offered him a long-term deal that would have made him the highest-paid closer in history," Cashman says. "He turned down a deal in the winter that would have made him higher paid than Trevor Hoffman. So, we'll be back in the same boat we were every year, which is a year-to-year discussion, and which would next year lead to a one-year contract, an arbitration decision or a multiyear contract."

If Rivera is to remain the A.L.'s premier closer, he'll need another pitch. Hitters have begun figuring out that Rivera isn't going up the ladder as often as he used to, and they can sit on his fastball when it crosses the plate below the belt. Rivera is working on a changeup, but so far it has been nothing more than a show pitch.

If the changeup becomes a big part of Rivera's

SLIPPING? Rivera in the ninth is still automatic, but he can't stay on top without developing another pitch.

Contending with closers

Among teams going for the playoffs, only the Yankees are almost certain of victory when they take a lead into the ninth inning.

At the top

Yankees: Mariano Rivera

He's no longer unhittable, but if the Yanks take a lead into the ninth, the game's virtually over.

Better than OK

Mets: Armando Benitez

Has overcome control problems to quietly become one of the more reliable closers in the game. If the Mets have a significant edge in their tong wars with the Braves, he's it.

Braves: John Rocker, Kerry Ligtenberg, et al.

Yeah, they've got the best-rated bullpen in baseball, but the lack of a dominant guy will ensure plenty of Maalox moments down the stretch.

Blue Jays: Billy Koch

The Jays hope the streaky fireballer brings his 'A' game down the stretch, but he throws more two-inning saves than any hard thrower should, and wear-and-tear could be a problem again.

White Sox: Keith Foulke, Bobby Howry

They haven't been through a pennant race, but Foulke and Howry have been at least solid and sometimes spectacular. A lot of managers would kill to have Jerry Manuel's options at the end of a game.

A little iffy

A's: Jason Isringhausen

After going from prospect to suspect, Izzy has reinvented himself in the new role. He's not quite dominant, but with this club's offense, he doesn't need to be.

Cardinals: Dave Veres

Has been solid and reliable, and Tony La Russa has stacked the bullpen in front of him with good pitchers to compensate for lack of pennant-race experience.

Diamondbacks: Matt Mantei, Byung-Hyun Kim

Both young closers have struggled with mechanics, and Mantei's health remains an issue.

Giants: Robb Nen

The years have taken their toll, though for the most part Nen is reliable.

Red Sox: Derek Lowe

He has struggled recently, and the two-inning saves aren't helping. Lowe remains a significant asset, but the setup shuffle in the rest of the pen has hurt.

Mariners: Kazuhiro Sasaki

Does Sasaki mean "streaky" in Japanese? He seems to have turned the corner, but Lou Piniella won't be patient in a pennant race; Sweet Lou has been known to kill off a couple of closers in his day.

Looks like trouble

Dodgers: Jeff Shaw

Many things will keep the Dodgers anchored to the .500 mark, but Shaw's struggles are at or near the top of the list. —B.M.

future, his transition would mirror that of the Padres' Hoffman. Hoffman paid his dues to the injury gods early in his career, but he could see the writing on the wall even before he got his rotator cuff cleaned out in 1995, the same year the Marlins sent him to San Diego as part of the Gary Sheffield deal.

"I was basically a hard thrower," Hoffman says. "But I also knew after watching Brian Harvey in Florida that I needed kind of an equalizer pitch, something that really kept guys off balance. And for me, it wasn't going to be the split-finger—I didn't have a good feel for it, nor did I want to put that pressure on my arm. And I came up with the changeup. When they were leaning on the fastball, I needed to rely on something else."

But for a less-established closer, the process of adding pitches on the fly can be risky. Kerry Ligtenberg can speak from experience—his roller-coaster career as a closer took off when he added a splitter, but elbow surgery turned him back into a part-time closer and setup man. Now, as the Braves head toward another meaningful September, he flops back and forth between roles, helping to pick up the pieces left by Rocker.

"When you're a closer and you pitch in games, it's usually do or die, and you can't be out there messing around," Ligtenberg says. "If you're a starter, you can mess around with certain hitters up at different times. But if you're a closer, you need to go hard all the time."

Ligtenberg's role in the Rocker debacle highlights another important longevity factor that Rivera and Hoffman share—managerial trust and stability. Under Joe Torre, the Yankees have babied Rivera, rarely bringing him into the game in the eighth inning or using him for three days in a row. Hoffman speaks glowingly of his relationship with manager Bruce Bochy, which gives him the confidence to ask for a day off when his arm is hanging.

Other important tools that Rivera and Hoffman



ROBERT SEALE / TSN

UNEXPECTED CURVE: Almost unhittable last year, Wagner is out for the season after elbow surgery, and the Astros' bullpen is a problem.

have are a smooth delivery and a steady demeanor. After a trying half-season of watching the fidgety Rocker make Al Hrabosky's old "Mad Hungarian" act look like an exercise in Zen meditation, Atlanta pitching coach Leo Mazzone has some strong opinions about why the guys who pitch the ninth don't hold up for long.

"Because the closers

are throwing now with such violence," he says. "With the exception of Hoffman, or even Rivera, who throws extremely hard but is smooth, there's a whole bunch of 'em that get erratic and overthrow, try to blow guys out, and end up with two on and two out before they save the game."

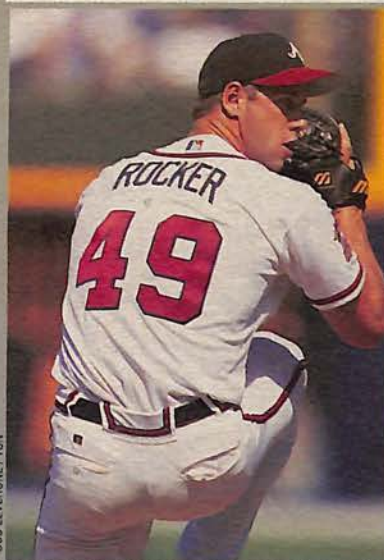
"They think they've got to grow a goatee, look mean, start firing balls all over the place, grunt when they throw, stare down somebody and act like they're going to macho their way through. I don't even like to look at that as a pitching coach."

Cincinnati's Danny Graves is a young closer who doesn't fit Mazzone's stereotype. Graves has an easy delivery and can throw multiple pitches, making him a solid candidate for a long career as a closer. He was able to get used to the pressure as a closer in college and the minors instead of training for the job as a starter. He thinks his emergence may be part of a new trend, one in which closers come into the job as pitchers rather than just hard throwers.

"A lot of the closers were guys that threw 95-plus," Graves says. "They just came out and threw as hard as they can. Nowadays you've got guys like me and Trevor Hoffman and Keith Foulke, Derek Lowe. We're not guys that are just going to blow people away. I think since we know how to pitch, and we know how to change speeds, that's going to help keep us in the game longer, keep us as a closer. You don't have to throw 99 miles an hour to be a closer."

TSN

Bob McCullough, a free-lance writer based in Boston, is a frequent contributor to THE SPORTING NEWS.



BOB LEVERONE / TSN

LOSING IT: Rocker has been unable to control his fastball, forcing the Braves to use a committee to close games.

'When you're a closer and you pitch in games, it's usually do or die, and you can't be out there messing around.'

—Braves reliever Kerry Ligtenberg



ROBERT SEALE / TSN

SMOOTH OPERATOR: Hoffman still throws heat, but his changeup is what makes him tough on hitters.

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Michael Knisley

Insider

Schilling deal may play part in two division races

Late last Friday afternoon in the visiting clubhouse at Pro Player Stadium, Curt Schilling watches a game, a Phillies' game, on a laptop computer propped open on a stool next to

his locker. He pays particular attention to the pitcher in Philadelphia's familiar red-and-white pinstripes, a big blond righthander with raw power and a biting slider.

Nobody, none of his brand new teammates on the Arizona Diamondbacks, bothers Schilling as he stares at the screen and watches himself. It's the way of the world in a major league clubhouse. You don't bug today's pitcher unless he bugs you first, a maxim compounded in this case by the fact that very few Diamondbacks know Schilling well enough to make easy small-talk. These are their first few hours together.

But they notice. Randy Johnson notices.

"He's computer literate," Johnson says, watching from a distance. "I'm not. Maybe he can teach me how to use that thing."

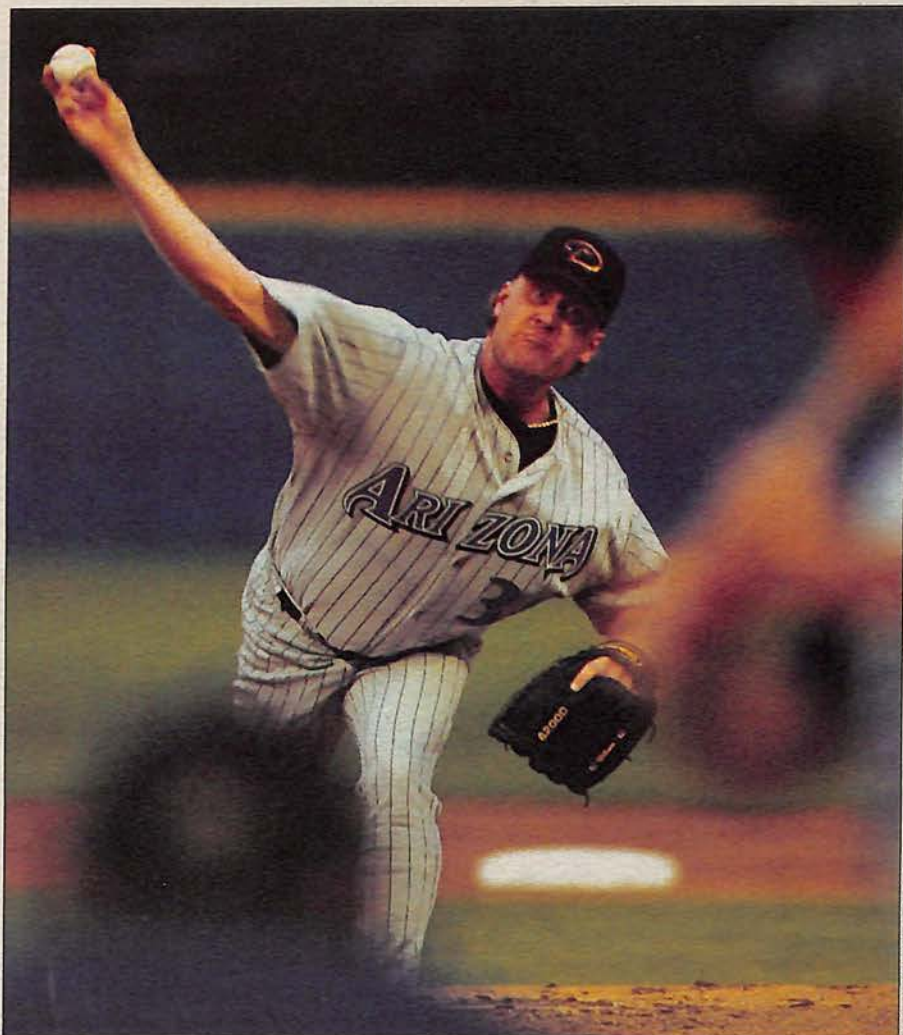
You already know the D-Backs got themselves a pretty fair pitcher last week when they outbid four other playoff contenders for Schilling. They got a power pitcher with control, a strikeout artist, a proven winner, a veteran who has been through the playoff wars, a dominator who right now has one of the hottest arms in the game.

Schilling's season numbers—he entered the week 7-6 with a 3.73 ERA—don't tell the whole truth about Arizona's trade-deadline acquisition. His more recent numbers come closer. In his last nine starts, Schilling is 6-2 with an ERA of 1.90.

You knew he was good. But you may not have known—even some of the Diamondbacks didn't know—what a technogeek Schilling is during the process of staying good. That game he was watching last Friday afternoon was his last matchup with the Marlins, from April 1999. CD-ROM and indexed by batter. His collection has grown to 60 disks by now, each at 650 megs.

On Friday, he needs to know why the Marlins' Derrek Lee has had so much success (6-for-12 with three home runs) against him, so he rummages through the disks for those 12 at-bats. He clicks on Lee's name. He sees the past.

"I'm not going to reinvent the wheel here," Schilling says. "I'm not going to do anything no-



SCHILLING COMPARISON: Though he's 7-6 overall, he's 6-2 (1.90 ERA) in his last nine starts.

body else has done. I'm not going to throw pitches no one else has thrown. I realized a long time ago that preparation was one of the few things that all great pitchers have in common. I can honestly walk out there on every fifth day now and say to myself that nobody is going to come to the plate more prepared to hit than I am to pitch."

That's what the Diamondbacks got from Philadelphia last week—consummate professionalism.

They didn't get Schilling at his very best. They may never have him at his very best, at least not this season. Doctors tell him it will take until next year for his arm and shoulder to get back to where they were before last December's surgery. The mid-90s velocity that took him to consecutive 300-strikeout seasons in 1997 and '98 isn't consistently there.

But Arizona got enough of the very best Schilling to make the difference in a race for the playoffs.

When he absolutely needs the velocity, the big pitch, Schilling still can find it, as he did with a bases-loaded, two-out strikeout of Preston Wilson last Friday night. In part because he didn't pitch during the first month of the season, he enters the stretch with an arm nowhere nearly worn out.

The D-Backs aren't a perfect team yet. As the clock ticked toward Monday's trade deadline, they still lacked stability in right field and punch on offense. They're a bottom-half team in National League statistics for average, runs and on-base percentage. Mostly because of their offensive shortcomings, they were only 23-27 in their last 50 games through Saturday.

And Schilling's history against the Giants, the most formidable obstacle between the Diamondbacks and the division title, isn't particularly good. The season may well come down to the eight games those teams play against each other in the last 11 days, and Schilling is only 3-6 lifetime against San Francisco.

But the way the schedule falls for Arizona the rest of the way, Schilling and Johnson should be able to start at least 23 of the remaining games, beginning with this weekend's series against the Mets.

It's hard to argue with the probability that they'll build a cushion in the standings before those late showdowns with the Giants, as well as their pair of September series with the Dodgers.

"Obviously, it's very premature to be talking about playoffs and the World Series and all that," Johnson says. "But this team is going to get to the playoffs. I'm fairly confident of that. We went and got Curt to get us past where we were last year (a first-round playoff loss to the Mets)."

As it happens, Schilling's arrival in Phoenix could affect the outcome in the N.L. East as much as the N.L. West. When

the trade happened, Arizona had three series left with Atlanta (including the one early this week) and two with New York. If the D-Backs' current rotation isn't interrupted by rainouts or other hitches, the Braves can expect to see Johnson, Schilling and Brian Anderson (8-4, 3.96) in each of their pair of three-game series in September. Atlanta wasn't scheduled to face Johnson earlier this week.

The Mets will miss Schilling this weekend in Phoenix and should miss him again in New York at the end of August.

The next two months, as well as October if the D-Backs make it that far, will tell intriguing tales of "what is" and "what could have been." The original list of six teams to which Schilling agreed to be traded included both New York clubs, Arizona, Cleveland, Atlanta and St. Louis. At the last minute, he nixed a deal with the Indians that

ELIOT J. SCHUCHTER FOR TSN

would have sent first baseman/outfielder Richie Sexson, infielder Enrique Wilson and righthander Jaret Wright to Philadelphia, saying, "In the end, I decided I'm not an American League guy." That trade likely looked better to the Phillies than the eventual deal they got from the D-Backs (outfielder Travis Lee, lefthander Omar Daal and righthanders Nelson Figueroa and Vicente Padilla).

Three teams on that original list of six—the Mets, Braves and Cardinals—could have had Schilling for their stretch runs to the N.L. playoffs. Instead, they are strong possibilities now to be playing against him in October. The Cardinals have finished their regular-season series with the D-Backs.

Schilling is 10-5 in his career against the Mets, and 8-8 against Atlanta. In '93, he was the most valuable player in the NLCS against the Braves. He started twice in that series and struck out 19 Braves with a 1.69 ERA. In one of those games, he struck out the first five Atlanta hitters he faced, still a League Championship Series record.

He has that game on CD-ROM, too, not that the Braves he was to see Wednesday night bear much resemblance to their '93 team.

But last Saturday, the day after his Diamondbacks debut, in which he went eight innings and gave up one run on six hits in a 4-1 victory, there he was, back at the laptop, boning up for his next start.

"I know the Braves' lineup I'll face on Wednesday," he says. "I know pretty much what it'll be. So I've got those nine to 11 guys on CD-ROM, and I'll go over them for the next four days. I'll know what I want to do."

For the record, a couple of hours after his Friday afternoon computer session on the Marlins, Schilling faced Derrek Lee three times. Lee popped out twice and grounded out once. **TSN**

Michael Knisley is a senior writer for THE SPORTING NEWS.

MOVERS & SHAKERS

Because George Steinbrenner will not be allowed to buy the World Series championship outright, the rest of the season and the postseason will be played. And watch out, George, some other teams also traded for enough hired guns to give your Yankees a run.

GOOD MOVES

1. Arizona. Taking Curt Schilling from the Phillies gives the Diamondbacks the best 1-2 pitching punch in baseball. The price was right, too: A 2-10 pitcher, disappointing Travis Lee and two pitching prospects. It's too bad Schilling can't hit because the Diamondbacks could use some offense.

2. Cleveland. Just when some thought the Indians were thinking of giving up on 2000, they went on a shopping spree, making three deals in a day. All-Star Bob Wickman will be an improvement at closer, and slick-fielding first baseman David Segui has hit better than .330 most of the season. Wil Cordero's offense and versatility also should help, and starters Jason Bere and Steve Woodard shouldn't hurt. Still, the best move the Indians made was not trading right fielder Manny Ramirez. Now all they need to do is re-sign him.

3. N.Y. Yankees. The world champions grabbed one of the best available starters in lefty Denny Neagle after they had traded for David Justice. And still they weren't done. If they don't win it all, they should be embarrassed.

4. N.Y. Mets. Finally able to complete a deal, the Mets made a winner in acquiring shortstop Mike Bordick without giving the Orioles much in return. And remember the name Rick White, a 31-year-old righthander who came from Tampa Bay. You'll be

hearing about him in October.

5. Atlanta. Righthander Andy Ashby was a bust in Philadelphia, but he has already been a plus for the Braves. He's well worth former top pitching prospect Bruce Chen and a minor league pitcher.

COSTLY MOVE

1. Cincinnati. When shortstop Barry Larkin turned down the Mets, the Reds rewarded him with a three-year, \$27 million deal. Then they rewarded their fans by threatening to raise ticket prices ... this week.

QUESTIONABLE MOVES

1. St. Louis. The Cardinals needed a first baseman to hit home runs because they can't count on Mark McGwire. They ended up with righthanded closer Mike Timlin, who was such a success in Baltimore the Orioles agreed to pay about \$4 million of his salary to get rid of him. The Cardinals also picked up lefthanded reliever Jason Christiansen, who had a 7.65 ERA in games since May 17 for the Pirates.

2. Chicago White Sox. The Sox needed help in the field and on the mound. They got catcher Charles Johnson, a four-time Gold Glove winner whose ability behind the plate recently has come into question. They also got 41-year-old DH Harold Baines, whose .266 average won't mean much on the A.L.'s highest scoring team, which already has a DH named Frank Thomas.

3. Boston. The Red Sox traded for righthander Rolando Arrojo and his 6.04 ERA, overpaid infielder Mike Lansing and third baseman Ed Sprague, who couldn't crack the lineup of the mighty Padres.

4. Toronto. RHP Esteban Loaiza? He's not exactly Schilling, Neagle or Ashby. Maybe that's OK, though, because Joey Hamilton is looking good on his latest rehab assignment. He should be ready as soon as the games don't mean anything.

5. Los Angeles. Explain this: The Dodgers gave up on righty Ismael Valdes last season. Then he goes 2-4 and serves up 17 homers in 67 innings for the Cubs and the Dodgers want him back. And you wonder why they haven't won a postseason game since 1988?

WATCH OUT NOW

1. Baltimore. Maybe the Orioles finally figured out that they need to start over. In four deals, they traded away more than \$20 million in 2001 salary and received 10 players, including six pitchers 26 or younger. If nothing else, they'll have plenty of money to spend badly in free agency again.

—Stan McNeal

Strikeouts don't mean titles

Curt Schilling and Randy Johnson form a fearsome strikeout tandem in Arizona. Before the trade, Schilling had fanned 96, Johnson 228. Thirteen teams since 1970 have had two pitchers who struck out 200 batters each and finished in the top five in the league in Ks. Of those teams, only three went to the postseason, and only one won the World Series.

YEAR	TEAM	PLAYERS	FINISH
1972	Tigers	Mickey Lolich (250), Joe Coleman (236)	Lost playoffs
Three years after Denny McClain won 31, the Tigers dominated on the hill again.			
1973	Mets	Tom Seaver (251), Jon Matlack (205)	Lost World Series
Strikeouts fuel comeback from 11½ games out on August 5.			
1986	Mets	Dwight Gooden (200), Sid Fernandez (200)	Won World Series
The Mets rode this twosome to the world championship.			

Lots of K's, not enough W's

Three strikeout duos combined for more than 500 Ks, but none of them finished higher than third.

1973	Angels	Nolan Ryan (383), Bill Singer (241)	4th
383 is not a misprint. It is the modern-day record.			
1977	Angels	Ryan (341), Frank Tanana (205)	5th
Tanana had heat before wrecking his arm.			
1987	Astros	Ryan (270), Mike Scott (233)	3rd
All Ryan did was throw Ks.			



TSN ARCHIVES

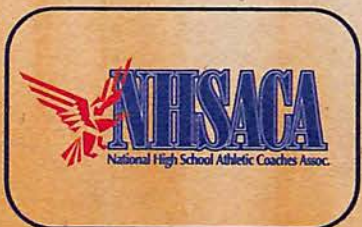
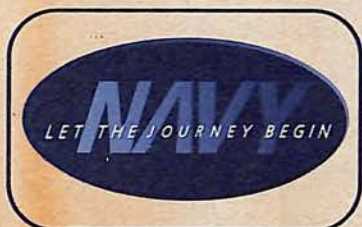
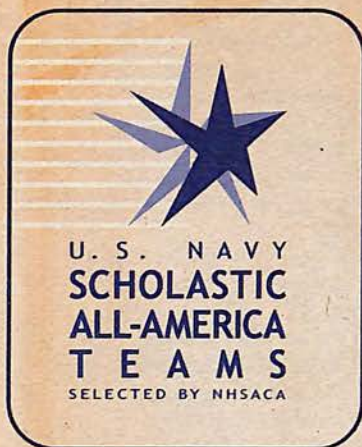
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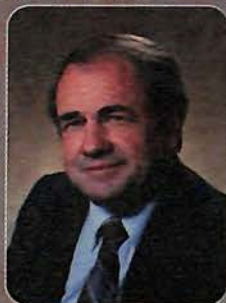
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The book on ... Jason Marquis

Braves RHP, 6-1/185, Rookie

Jason Marquis hoped for a September call-up from Class AA Greenville, but his first trip to the majors arrived well ahead of schedule.

With the Braves' bullpen hampered by injuries and John Rocker unable to regain command of his fastball, Marquis, 21, was called up June 5, and he has flourished.

Though he had started since the Braves made him a special selection between the first and second rounds of the 1996 draft, Marquis has made a solid transition to the bullpen. In 10 games, he's 1-0 with a stingy 1.50 ERA. Hitters have managed only a paltry .180 average against him.

"I'm a little surprised," Marquis admits, "especially for the first time coming out of the

bullpen. But it hasn't been too hard of an adjustment. I try and take it as, if I make my pitch at any level, I'll be successful."

The Braves have not been reluctant in recent years to jump pitchers from the lower minors to the big leagues. Kevin McGlinchy made a successful leap from Greenville to the majors last year, and it was his stiff shoulder that helped speed Marquis' arrival.

When he came up, Marquis didn't figure to remain for long. But the longer he stayed, the more impressive he was. While the turnstile to the bullpen continued revolving, he stayed and contributed.

"He's been terrific," manager Bobby Cox says. "He's a young guy, but he knows what he's doing and he's done a good job for us."

Marquis and the hulking Rocker are physical opposites, but each owns a 96 mph fastball and a good slider. Marquis, a native of Manhasset, N.Y., is comfortable throwing a changeup, and he's working on a curveball that would give him four solid pitches.

Though Marquis is receiving his baptism in the bullpen, he'll be a starter in the future. Some scouts wondered why the Braves didn't move him into the rotation right away, but the club's strategy of allowing young pitchers to experience success first seems to be working.

Marquis likely will be the fifth starter next season, learning at the feet of Cy Young winners Greg Maddux and Tom Glavine.

If Marquis blossoms as most scouts project, the Braves will have a 20-game winner to replace their current ones. —Bill Zack



GENE J. PASKARI/AP

TSN's Power Poll

Rk.	Team	W-L
1.	Atlanta	64-40
2.	Chicago White Sox	63-41
3.	N.Y. Mets	58-44
4.	Seattle	60-43
5.	Arizona	58-46
6.	N.Y. Yankees	55-44
7.	San Francisco	56-45
8.	St. Louis	57-46
9.	Oakland	56-47
10.	Anaheim	56-49
11.	Los Angeles	55-48
12.	Toronto	55-50
13.	Boston	53-47
14.	Cleveland	52-49
15.	Cincinnati	52-51
16.	Colorado	50-52
17.	Texas	50-52
18.	Florida	50-53
19.	Montreal	47-53
20.	Detroit	47-55
21.	Chicago Cubs	47-55
22.	Kansas City	47-56
23.	Minnesota	48-58
24.	Philadelphia	45-57
25.	Pittsburgh	45-57
26.	San Diego	45-58
27.	Baltimore	44-58
28.	Tampa Bay	43-59
29.	Milwaukee	43-61
30.	Houston	38-65

Through last Saturday's games, TSN's Power Poll is determined by TSN editors.

The seventh-inning stretch

1. Campaign 2000. There's a guy from Atlanta who supports Reform Party candidate Pat Buchanan's isolationist immigration policies.

2. Adam Smith. Only in baseball would the Blue Ribbon suggestion be made that a successful organization share the wealth.

3. Juan Gonzalez. We won't say the un-star has made unpopular choices, but he was last seen in Detroit in a foreign car drinking Tab while downloading Sinead O'Connor from Napster.

4. Curt Schilling. Philly fans are mean, nasty and foul-mouthed. And that's toward their favorite players. Arizona fans still are trying to figure out why the ball doesn't have any dimples.

5. Red Sox. Nobody should be surprised that dope was found in a player's car. The team has been hiding a dope on the field all year. His name is Carl Everett.

6. Brad Radke. He stays in the land of 10,000 taxes because nobody there knows him. It won't be long before nobody else does, either.

7. Sparky Anderson. Baseball has no better speaker than the (and now Hall of Fame) former manager of the Tigers and Reds. —Matt Crossman



NEIL JACOBS/AP

FRONT OFFICE RUMBLINGS AND LOCKER ROOM WHISPERS FROM OUR STAFF

inside dish

The Dodgers, seeking someone they could count on in the heat of a pennant race, made a curious move by reacquiring RHP **Ismael Valdes**. Just eight months ago, after long questioning his resolve, Los Angeles sent Valdes to the Cubs in a five-player deal. Hindered first by tendinitis and then by a strange recurrence of blisters, Valdes—the ol' gamer—made all of 12 starts for **Don Baylor** this season. With the Giants surging and Arizona adding RHP **Curt Schilling**, the Dodgers' brain trust felt compelled to do something, er, anything, to avoid entrusting a spot in the stretch-run rotation to rookie RHP **Eric Gagne**. ... The Yankees are gloating—and rightfully so—about their ability to pull off two major deals (for OF/DH **Dave Justice** and LHP **Denny Neagle**) without giving up their No. 1 trade chip, heralded minor league IF **Alfonso Soriano**. As the trade deadline neared, though, Soriano again was the center of speculation as the Yanks pondered a deal for a left fielder. ... 2B **Chuck Knoblauch**'s elbow problems are causing some anxiety in the Bronx. The recently sidelined Knoblauch is having trouble extending his elbow while batting, and there's no telling how the strain might affect his throwing (hold the wise-cracks, please). ... Tigers G.M. **Randy Smith** to Texas fans hoping to see OF **Juan Gonzalez** back deep in the heart of: forgetaboutit. Smith says Rangers G.M. **Doug Melvin** told him that Texas had no interest in ever giving Gonzalez a multiyear contract. So much for 1B/DH **Rafael Palmeiro**'s offer to restructure his contract to free money for Gonzalez. ... Twins IF/OF **Denny Hocking** says that whenever the Yankees visit Minnesota, the attendance-starved

Twinkies know "there will be people in the stands." Sure enough, the opening game of the recent Yanks-Twins series at the Metrodome attracted a throng that fell a mere 32,353 fannies short of capacity. ... Say what you will about Orioles RF/DH **Albert Belle**, but don't say he's a slacker. Sir Albert has been playing on a sore left leg for almost a month but has stayed in the lineup for a club going nowhere. He hasn't missed a game this season, and he has been out of his club's lineup for only five games in the last 5½ years. ... Repeatedly thwarted in upgrade attempts, the Mets were advancing the theory that, really, it was up to their seasonlong cast of characters to determine whether they reach the playoffs. That view not exactly resonating throughout the organization, G.M. **Steve Phillips** finally put together the deal for SS **Mike Bordick**. ... Two of 1B/DH **Mike Stanley**'s former teammates spoke up forcefully last week when Boston dropped the respected 15-season veteran. Angels 1B **Mo Vaughn** says he recommended Stanley to the Anaheim brass, stressing his professionalism. And IF **Jeff Frye**, himself a popular Red Sox player, took G.M. **Dan Duquette** to task for unloading Stanley. A few days later, Duquette shipped Frye to Colorado in the seven-player Sox-Rox deal.



Gonzalez

ROBERT SEALE/TSN

Looking for a jump

David Cone can't sleep. It's easy to imagine a ghastly vision of a parade of opposing batters crossing the plate like demonic sheep, keeping him up at night.

The nightmare is rooted in reality.

The once-dominant Yankee is in the worst slump of his career, having lost eight straight games entering the week. The Yankees have lost each of Cone's last 12 starts.

And last weekend, he no longer even had the misery of insomnia at his own house.

After a loss last Thursday to Minnesota in which Cone served up eight runs and never got out of the sixth inning, owner George Steinbrenner had had enough.

He sent Cone to work at the team's player development center in Tampa. Cone, 1-10 with a 6.88 ERA, is desperate to improve, so he went.

Cone went through an inspection like one you would give a car that has always been reliable but suddenly doesn't run. What the heck is that knocking sound, anyway? In Cone's case, it's wood slamming into a baseball. That high-pitched squeak is the ball whizzing by.

Longtime pitching coach Billy Connors checked under the hood Saturday and Sunday. Whether he was able to fix anything will be crucial because the Yankees need to step on the gas down the stretch.

Cone worked extensively on his mechanics during a 15-minute bullpen session Saturday, an outing he and team officials called encouraging. "Billy has some great ideas," Cone says. "It's just kind of back to basics. Sometimes you get lost in what you're trying to do with your mechanics."

Manager Joe Torre hasn't asked for the keys to Cone's starting position—at least not as of Sunday. With Dwight Gooden pitching well and Orlando Hernandez due back from the D.L., something's got to give.

Cone was expected to miss a start early this week but take the mound this weekend against Seattle. "That's all I'm thinking about ... short term right now," Cone says. "I'm going to be ready to pitch if they want to give me the ball."



NO VACATION: David Cone went to Florida to fix his game.

JOHN DUNN FOR TSN

Calling 'em as I see 'em by Bob McCullough

Suspend now—appeal later

The punishment probably fit the crime, even though plenty of fans would have liked to have seen Carl Everett get an extended midsummer vacation for his belligerent outburst at plate umpire Ron Kulpa after their batter's box dispute July 15 during the Red Sox/Mets game. But while Frank Robinson, vice president of on-field operations for Major League Baseball, may have nailed it by handing Everett a 10-game suspension, the week it took to hand down the sentence once again exposed the Pony Express pace of the appeal process.

Three days seems like an appropriate amount of time to gather reports and study tape after a given incident. One can only imagine the nightmare of data-gathering that presented itself when the L.A. bullpen posse went into the stands at Wrigley Field back in May. But the Everett affair was an isolated, two-man incident, and the implications were clear as a bell to millions of viewers across the country. The decision should have been rendered by Wednesday or Thursday.

By waiting a week and testing the political winds of public opinion, baseball allowed Boston to keep Everett on the field for two games in a pivotal series against the White Sox, invoking whiffs of the sour odor left by the Roberto Alomar-John Hirschbeck debacle—a decision that seemed to take forever while Alomar continued to play. Major League Baseball also gave Everett a platform he didn't deserve by keeping him on the field, lending credence to his ridiculous "blame the media" mantra.

To keep players like Alomar and Everett from using the snail's pace of the appeal process to gain a forum or a competitive advantage, MLB should have the right to enact an immediate, three-game "act of God" suspension whenever the conduct of a player, umpire, manager or coach is so violent or egregiously over-the-top (as defined by the commissioner) that the only issue is the length of the suspension. When the final decision is handed down, those three games would count as time served.

The Players Association should back off from its usual kneejerk "defend the player" stance and endorse such a rule, if only to recognize that the public is sick and tired of the kind of behavior Everett displayed, which went far beyond the "boys will be boys" antics of a typical brawl.

A final footnote to the sole inhabitant of Planet Carl: There's a direct line from the thousands of kids who buy your jersey to the alarming increase in violent attacks on umps and refs in youth sports across the country. Those kids deserve an apology, too, and they need to be told that while imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, in your case they should stick to copying your stance and hustle.

Bob McCullough, a freelance writer based in Boston, is a frequent contributor to THE SPORTING NEWS.

The Sporting News BEST SPORTS CITY

Presented by



What is the Best Sports City for 2000?

To vote for your favorite
sports city, log on to
sportingnews.com/sportscities2000

This week's candidate:

Phoenix

The Phoenix area has become a hotbed of sports activity in recent years. Now the nation's sixth-largest city, the area in the Sonoran Desert has been a prime location for expansion among the professional sports leagues. Add to that 190 golf courses (with 3 stops on the PGA/LPGA tours), and the Cactus League with 7 teams training every spring in Greater Phoenix.

The Suns had one of the best records in the NBA, ending the regular season an impressive 24 games over .500. They made it to the semifinals before being ousted by the eventual champions from L.A. The Coyotes had their second straight 90-point season but were disappointed by their first-round exit in the playoffs. In only their second season, the Diamondbacks made it to the playoffs—the fastest postseason appearance in history by an expansion team. The D-Backs also drew over 3 million to the "BOB". Where else but in Phoenix can you find a swimming pool in right-center field? On the gridiron, the Cardinals' hopes are high to improve their performance in the upcoming season. The Arizona State Sun Devils also made NIT and bowl appearances to further strengthen their city's candidacy.



MICHAEL KNISLEY'S

LINE DRIVES

■ The Rockies ought to insist on a contract clause for all their pitchers: No dissing Coors Field when they leave. Stan Belinda hammered another nail in the coffin of Colorado's hopes of ever attracting arms last week. On his release, Belinda (now a Brave) said: "This place chewed me up and spit me out, just like a lot of other pitchers."

■ Could this be a trend? Two major stars, Barry Larkin and Mike Mussina, refused the "opportunity" to be rent-a-players for the rest of the season. Good for them.

■ A little perspective on how special the Mets' infield was last year. Through Saturday these are their error totals this season: Robin Ventura 10, Lenny Harris 9, Melvin Mora (now an Oriole) 8, Todd Zeile 8, Edgardo Alfonzo 7, Rey Ordóñez 6. (New SS Mike Bordick had 9 errors in Baltimore.) Last year, the entire Mets' infield committed only 33—all season.

INSIDE THE A.L. EAST



MARK BOLTON FOR TSN

Who's HOT

Toronto 1B **Carlos Delgado**. So what else is new? Through last Saturday, he was batting .390 for the month of July, with five home runs and 21 RBIs. He batted .411 in June with nine homers, .340 in May with 10 homers and .319 in April with eight homers.

Who's NOT

Yankees 1B **Tino Martinez**, who through Saturday was in a 6-for-38 funk, which started after a four-hit game on July 17. Martinez, who has hit 25 or more home runs in each of the past five seasons, had only nine homers after 362 at-bats this year.

CIRCLE THE CALENDAR

There's always a charged atmosphere when former Yankees player and manager **Lou Piniella** returns to the Bronx, and things should be hopping in a four-game Seattle-New York series that runs through Monday. The matchup of Piniella's Mariners and the Yankees could be a postseason preview.

Keep an eye on

DH **Brad Fullmer** is the most obscure member of the Blue Jays' slew of 20-homer hitters. Fullmer's surprising bat—he's hitting .296 with 20 home runs and 64 RBIs—could go a long way toward keeping Toronto in the division race.

High and inside

Back in the lineup after being sidelined for a month with a hamstring injury, RF **Trot Nixon** could give Boston a key lift. Not only was Nixon an offensive force before going down, he was showing leadership skills, too.

TSN's Wired World

Although Orioles RF/DH **Albert Belle** is on his way to his ninth consecutive 100-RBI season, he is not a cinch to reach 30 homers for the ninth year in a row. He has 18 this year. For more on the Orioles, visit:

sportingnews.com/baseball/teams/orioles

PROSPECT WATCH

OF **Andy Brown**, the Yankees' No. 1 pick in the 1998 amateur draft as a high school player out of Richmond, Ind., continues to find the going tough in his third pro season. After 92 games for Class A Greensboro this year, Brown was hitting .243 with 139 strikeouts. He does lead his club in home runs (15) and doubles (25).

Baltimore

44-58: 4th

Acquisition of young arms signals a focus for future



As the rebuilding takes shape over the next six months, it will become clear the team has prioritized pitching in its long-term plan. Of the

10 players the team received for **Mike Bordick**, **Mike Timlin**, **Harold Baines** and **Charles Johnson**, six are pitchers, none of them older than 26. In addition, the losses of those four players gives the Orioles the payroll flexibility to take care of getting RHP **Mike Mussina** signed.

... 1B **Chris Richard**, obtained from the Cardinals with RHP **Mark Nussbeck** in the Timlin

deal, could be the starter next season. His acquisition signals an admission by the club that **Calvin Pickering** is not going to develop into the star first baseman it had predicted. ... The trade of Johnson, 29, with Baines to the White Sox for C **Brook Fordyce** and minor league RHPs **Miguel Felix**, 23, **Juan Figuero**, 21, and **Jason Lakman**, 23, was the most significant and perhaps the most telling. Johnson represents the type of player a developing team would build around. But the team felt it would be unable to re-sign him after the season. Fordyce will step into Johnson's role as starter.

SCOUTING REPORT: 2B **Delino DeShields** has been criticized often for his defense. For a player with his speed, scouts say he lacks range, particularly to his right. He also possesses a below-average arm, which has in part prevented the team from following through on a plan to move him to center field and elevate prospect 2B **Jerry Hairston** from Class AAA Rochester. However, when Hairston is fully recovered from shoulder surgery, it could occur.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: Many in the organization believe RHP **Sidney Ponson** has been struggling because he has become infatuated with strikeouts. He has averaged 6.2 per nine innings (compared with 4.8 last year), and it has changed the way he has pitched. He has lost the velocity drop that made his changeup so devastating. His changeup used to clock in around 84 mph, a sizeable speed change from his fastball, but last week it was up at 88 and 89. —*Dave Sheinin*

ORIOLES

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Mora	.400	2	5	0	2	0	1	.400	.600	0	1	0	0
Clark+	.301	79	256	49	77	9	28	.413	.473	4	45	47	6
Belle	.295	102	400	53	118	18	76	.359	.505	0	45	39	3
Surhoff+	.293	102	406	55	119	13	57	.342	.456	7	45	29	3
Conine	.286	81	269	36	77	10	31	.345	.454	2	35	24	8
DeShields+	.286	92	343	55	98	6	45	.356	.429	27	52	39	10
Fordyce	.272	40	125	18	34	5	21	.313	.464	0	23	6	0
Anderson+	.256	94	356	53	91	13	35	.348	.410	11	64	45	1
Myers+	.233	23	73	5	17	1	5	.273	.315	0	23	4	0
Minor	.200	11	25	1	5	0	1	.259	.200	0	4	1	0
*Matos	.195	24	41	4	8	0	1	.292	.341	1	7	6	1
*Coffie+	.179	10	28	3	5	0	3	.303	.250	1	5	5	1
*Richard+	.000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

GRAND SLAMS: Belle (2), Clark (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
*Kohlmeier	0.00	0-0	1	2.0	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	.286
Mussina	3.86	6-10	22	158.2	160	71	68	20	127	34	0	.260
*Parrish+	3.86	0-1	1	7.0	4	4	3	1	9	2	0	.160
Trombley	4.08	4-2	44	39.2	37	19	18	10	39	15	2	.247
Groom+	4.15	3-3	44	39.0	36	18	18	4	25	15	4	.259
Mercedes	4.73	6-4	24	66.2	79	39	35	6	27	26	0	.299
Mills	5.03	2-0	19	19.2	19	11	11	5	18	11	1	.244
Ponson	5.44	5-7	21	137.1	143	88	83	21	95	60	0	.263
Rapp	6.11	6-7	21	112.0	138	82	76	13	70	55	0	.303
McElroy+	6.68	1-0	28	31.0	30	26	23	5	26	22	0	.244
*Ryan+	7.91	1-3	20	19.1	22	18	17	3	21	21	0	.278
*Molina	9.00	0-0	9	13.0	25	14	13	2	8	9	0	.397

SHUTOUTS: Ponson (1)

COMPLETE GAMES: Mussina (4), Ponson (3), Erickson (1)

Boston

53-47: 2nd

Club dumps underachievers in favor of sketchy Arrojio



The seven-player deal the team made with the Rockies allowed it to dump two underachieving righthanded pitchers (**Brian Rose** and

John Wasdin) and an unhappy second baseman (**Jeff Frye**). The return was far less clear. RHP **Rolando Arrojio** was the lynchpin of the deal and immediately was inserted in the rotation. Arrojio has shown flashes of being strong, but questions about his makeup have followed him since he was a Devil Ray. In **Mike Lansing**, the Red Sox have a hard-nosed player like Frye, with more

JULY'S GRADES	
OFFENSE	B+
PITCHING	B-
DEFENSE	B

The reappearance of O'Leary's bat makes Everett's absence not so bad at all.

Pedro Martinez came back, but Schourek got hurt. The bullpen is keeping the club afloat.

Sprague played better than expected at third. Offerman proved first is safe with him.

power but less defensive presence. He has shown signs of becoming a productive everyday player, but consistency has eluded him. The team assumes his \$6 million contract for next year, a heavy burden. He will play a lot of second base, given it is his natural position and manager **Jimmy Williams** has little faith in **Jose Offerman**'s presence there, especially with a bruised left knee. Lansing may play some third base as well, with **Ed Sprague** serving as the right-handed DH.

SCOUTING REPORT: Arrojio throws in the low 90s and has a four-seam and two-seam fastball, with a good slider and serviceable changeup. His trade to Colorado last year never sat well with Arrojio, and his mindset often has been linked with his results. With the Rockies this year, he was 5-9 with a 6.04 ERA. In his two starts at Fenway Park, Arrojio went 1-1 with a 1.93 ERA, giving up eight hits. Away from Coors Field, his ERA was 4.94. Arrojio is particularly strong against righthanders, but lefthanders can chew him up. He drops down in his delivery with lefties at the plate, and he will have to lose that habit.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: Nomar Garciaparra's flirtation with a .400 batting average could turn into a serious romance. He consistently gets the barrel of his bat on any pitch within or slightly outside the strike zone. Blazing wrist speed and a quick read of pitches allows him to always hit hard. He has cut back on his stride and lifts his front left leg a bit, causing him to step back, then swiftly uncoil. —*Michael Silverman*

RED SOX

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Garciaparra	.394	84	312	65	123	15	61	.452	.657	5	29	36	13
*Alcantara	.344	12	32	6	11	2	3	.382	.563	0	6	2	1
Everett#	.316	88	320	59	101	26	75	.396	.631	7	83	39	4
Nixon+	.287	68	244	42	70	8	39	.371	.504	4	53	32	0
Daubach+	.276	91	323	41	89	15	58	.350	.498	1	88	35	1
Hatleberg+	.268	52	127	11	34	6	27	.343	.472	0	25	15	2
Varitek#	.267	85	270	36	72	6	42	.362	.422	0	55	39	4
O'Leary+	.258	79	295	45	76	9	40	.321	.403	0	41	28	1
Gilkey	.257	11	35	5	9	1	7	.350	.457	0	5	4	0
Offerman#	.241	78	316	44	76	5	26	.331	.329	0	49	43	6
Lewis	.237	57	169	25	40	1	9	.295	.296	7	21	13	1
Alexander	.209	59	129	16	27	1	9	.233	.302	0	29	4	5
Sprague	.200	21	75	6	15	2	8	.268	.307	0	14	7	1
Lansing	.000	1	4	0	0	0	0	.000	.000	0	0	0	0

GRAND SLAMS: Everett, Nixon (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
P. Martinez	1.38	12-3	18	137.0	82	23	21	11	188	25	0	.168
Beck	2.25	0-0	8	8.0	6	2	2	1	6	2	0	.200
Pichardo	2.93	4-2	19	40.0	35	17	13	1	21	17	0	.238
Lowe	3.28	2-4	46	57.2	59	21	21	5	50	13	23	.259
Garces	3.31	5-0	45	54.1	41	20	20	4	54	14	1	.207
Cormier+	3.74	2-1	39	45.2	51	24	19	7	25	9	0	.280
Wakefield	4.90	6-5	33	101.0	108	59	55	23	57	39	0	.273
Fassero+	5.04	7-4	18	85.2	105	49	48	12	57	32	0	.307
Florie	5.06	0-3	17	26.2	37	20	15	3	17	11	1	.327
R. Martinez	5.75	8-6	20	98.2	114	68	63	9	69	50	0	.289
Arrojio	0.00	0-0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-

SHUTOUTS: P. Martinez (3)

COMPLETE GAMES: P. Martinez (4)

New York

55-44: 1st

In grand fashion, Hill giving exactly what the club needs



In his first week as a Yankee, **Glenallen Hill** hit two scorching home runs—one on his first swing in a Yankees uniform, the other a game-

winning, ninth-inning, pinch-hit grand slam. Hill, 35, is exactly what the team needed, someone who can come off the bench and go deep. He can't run or field, but his one skill is more than enough. He is the type of player who affects a game even when he's not in it, as opposing managers must contemplate bringing in a lefty reliever with the knowledge the Yankees

have Hill. ... **David Cone's** trip to the team's developmental center in Florida gives it two starting pitchers at its minor league complex in Tampa. **Orlando Hernandez** has been rehabilitating right elbow and back problems. He has been in good spirits, determined to take his time to ensure he doesn't return too quickly this time (as he did the last time). The club hopes to have him back in the rotation sometime around August 10. Also in Tampa, reliever **Allen Watson** (shoulder) appears to be salvaging his season, putting off necessary surgery until the winter.

SCOUTING REPORT: Entering the week, RHP **Dwight Gooden**, 35, had won three straight starts since joining the team, boosting his chances of staying in the rotation (replacing Cone) once Hernandez returns. Gooden says he has finally accepted he can no longer blow fastballs by opposing hitters and now resorts to doing what so many other pitchers do for most of their careers: pitching to locations and using off-speed stuff when behind in the count. So far it has worked better than the Yankees ever could have hoped.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: The team, because it is a veteran-heavy group, continues to be bothered more than its opponents by the new umpires. The starting pitchers, especially, have been upset by inconsistent strike zones. This has the potential of throwing them off their games. This appears to be something the club should get better at as time goes on, but that's much easier said than done. —Ken Davidoff

YANKEES

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Turner	.360	22	50	7	18	1	6	.418	.480	0	9	5	0
Jeter	.328	87	366	74	120	10	50	.384	.481	16	58	30	13
Williams#	.323	99	390	78	126	22	94	.395	.595	9	63	45	0
Vizcaino#	.310	29	84	17	26	0	7	.333	.381	2	16	4	0
O'Neill+	.303	97	386	60	117	13	69	.357	.459	8	59	36	0
Posada#	.291	94	306	56	89	17	51	.431	.523	2	87	71	5
Justice+	.286	91	329	61	94	27	77	.382	.599	1	61	52	2
Knoblauch	.285	75	309	56	88	5	22	.348	.401	9	34	27	15
Martinez+	.257	98	362	42	93	9	59	.326	.414	2	48	31	3
Brosius	.251	80	283	34	71	9	40	.313	.389	0	44	25	6
Delgado#	.244	31	45	6	11	1	4	.314	.333	1	9	5	3
Hill	.214	5	14	3	3	2	5	.214	.643	0	5	0	0
Bellinger	.211	51	95	16	20	5	11	.286	.411	2	22	5	3
Thompson	.200	12	30	7	6	2	6	.314	.433	0	7	4	0

GRAND SLAMS: Williams (2), Brosius, Hill (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
*Choate+	1.50	0-0	10	6.0	6	2	1	0	4	5	0	.240
Nelson	2.21	6-2	49	53.0	29	15	13	1	56	36	0	.163
Neagle+	2.25	2-0	3	24.0	12	6	6	1	17	7	0	.145
Stanton+	2.96	2-1	47	48.2	44	17	16	1	51	16	0	.243
Rivera	2.98	4-3	39	45.1	37	17	15	3	32	14	24	.216
Clemens	3.78	9-6	20	123.2	116	64	52	15	115	53	0	.243
Mendoza	4.25	7-4	14	65.2	66	32	31	9	30	20	0	.260
Pettitte+	4.37	10-6	19	117.1	125	63	57	14	70	51	0	.270
Grimsley	4.58	3-2	42	70.2	71	40	36	6	36	29	0	.259
Gooden	4.91	5-3	12	58.2	70	37	32	16	32	25	0	.299
Cone	6.88	1-10	19	106.0	129	86	81	20	76	52	0	.301

SHUTOUTS: Mendoza, Pettitte (1)

COMPLETE GAMES: Hernandez, Pettitte (2), Clemens, Mendoza, Neagle (1)

*Rookie

+Left-handed

#Switch hitter

League leaders in bold

Statistics provided by STATS Inc. through Saturday, July 29.

Tampa Bay

43-59: 5th

Deals for fresh prospects offer hope for the future



The trading of RHP **Rick White** and LF **Bubba Trammell** to the Mets for OF **Jason Tyner** and RHP **Paul Wilson** was a deal for the future. Tyner, 23,

is a quick lefthanded hitter who can play in left or center and brings speed to a team that sorely lacks it. Wilson has a history of shoulder and elbow trouble, but the team hopes that's behind him. He will start in the bullpen. The team also dealt RHP **Jim Mecir** and lefthanded prospect **Todd Belitz** to Oakland for minor league RHP **Jesus Colome** and a player to be

named. The team thinks Colome, 20, is one of the best pitching prospects in the minors. He has a fastball in the 95-96-mph range. With Matt White, RHP **Jason Standridge**, LHP **Bobby Seay** and now Colome, the Devil Rays have stockpiled some quality young starting pitchers. ... Because of the trades of Mecir and Rick White, RHP **Esteban Yan** is back in the bullpen. Yan struggled as a starter and will be used as a setup man. RHP **Tanyon Sturtze** will take White's role in long relief. Rookie **Steve Cox** will take over as the starter in right field. Cox, who is average defensively, is in the lineup for his bat.

SCOUTING REPORT: The team hoped **Jose Guillen** would develop into the long-term starting right fielder. That doesn't appear to be happening. He has the tools to become a solid player. His biggest strength is his arm. However, he likes to show it off too much and misses cutoff men. He's decent in the field but doesn't get to balls he should. Offensively, Guillen has raw power and a quick bat, but he sorely lacks discipline and tries to pull the ball too much.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: 3B **Vinny Castilla** has been a major disappointment. He has been on the D.L. twice, missed more time with a hand injury and struggled horribly at the plate. It's possible Castilla's biggest problem has been switching leagues. Manager **Larry Rothschild** believes you see more fastballs in the N.L. Castilla is an impressive fastball hitter but struggles in the curveball-heavy A.L. —Chris Anderson

DEVIL RAYS

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
*Cox+	.295	64	146	20	43	6	20	.408	.466	0	18	26	2
Williams	.293	90	396	59	116	15	69	.329	.467	6	61	22	4
Vaughn	.286	76	287	53	82	17	44	.376	.540	4	75	42	0
McGriff+	.282	101	379	52	107	19	77	.365	.470	1	78	52	6
Flaherty	.281	68	256	27	72	5	22	.320	.383	0	36	15	2
DiFelice	.272	39	136	18	37	4	11	.313	.434	0	25	9	5
Canseco	.271	54	192	27	52	8	23	.397	.464	1	57	36	0
Cairo	.269	85	279	32	75	0	25	.315	.326	20	23	18	8
O. Guillen+	.263	43	76	18	20	2	11	.309	.395	1	6	5	4
J. Guillen	.255	61	184	27	47	7	23	.332	.446	0	38	12	4
F. Martinez#	.248	56	165	30	41	1	14	.351	.309	8	44	23	6
Johnson	.224	29	85	15	19	1	11	.316	.306	1	12	11	4
Castilla	.223	71	283	21	63	6	39	.259	.318	1	36	13	7
*Tyner+	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	0	0	0	0

GRAND SLAMS: McGriff (2), Cox, J. Guillen (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
Creek+	3.34	0-1	19	32.1	22	13	12	6	40	16	0	.191
Hernandez	3.72	2-3	44	46.0	51	23	19	6	37	10	19	.285
Lopez	3.92	8-7	33	105.2	114	53	46	12	58	38	2	.279
Guthrie+	4.60	1-1	33	31.1	32	18	16	4	25	17	0	.262
Rekar	4.64	4-6	18	95.0	115	56	49	14	50	19	0	.299
Trachsel	4.68	6-10	22	130.2	151	74	68	16	75	49	0	.292
Yan	6.75	5-7	22	109.1	133	85	82	24	80	35	0	.296
Sturtze	6.93	1-2	22	37.2	45	31	29	6	19	21	0	.302
Rupe	8.21	3-4	10	49.1	68	48	45	10	30	20	0	.337
*Harper	-	0-0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-
Wilson	-	0-0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-

SHUTOUTS: Trachsel (1)

COMPLETE GAMES: Trachsel (3), Lopez (2), Rekar (1)

Toronto

55-50: 3rd

Carpenter decides a change in windup is not the answer



Between recent outings, RHP **Chris Carpenter** changed his windup to bring his hands over his head, a move suggested by manager **Jim**

Fregosi to introduce more fluidity to the motion and, theoretically, sharpen the location of his fastball. But Carpenter, feeling uncomfortable, reverted to his old motion against Seattle on July 28 with poor results—eight hits, five walks and six earned runs in 3½ innings. He had elbow surgery last September but claims to be pitching pain-free. With an effective Carpenter, the

club wouldn't have had to look for a starter on the trade market. Fregosi made it fairly obvious that Carpenter, the No. 2 starter out of spring training, would lose his spot if there were an alternative. ... RHP **Esteban Loaiza** looked sharp last Thursday in his second start since being obtained from Texas. Loaiza strained his back in his last outing for the Rangers, and it stiffened during the airplane ride to Toronto. His physical condition was a big factor in his poor debut for the Jays.

SCOUTING REPORT: **Rob Ducey** gives the Jays a much-needed lefthanded bat off the bench. Obtained from the Phillies for future considerations, Ducey, 35, also will be used for late-inning defense and as a pinch runner. Ducey still has good speed, although he has never been much of a basestealer. He had a chance to win a starting job with the Jays in the early '90s, but he tried to pull the ball too much instead of using the whole field. Ducey insists his poor average this year has been a result of bad breaks rather than slowing bat speed.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: OF **Jose Cruz Jr.** leads the team in strikeouts but has been hitting in the three-hole in place of injured RF **Raul Mondesi**. Cruz stays out of double plays, and Fregosi didn't want to move 1B **Carlos Delgado**, the best cleanup hitter in the league, from his spot or LF **Shannon Stewart** from leadoff. Stewart is the closest to Mondesi for a combination of power and speed, but there isn't a suitable replacement to bat first. 2B **Craig Grebeck** is too slow and 2B **Homer Bush** doesn't get on base enough. —Tom Maloney

BLUE JAYS

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Delgado+	.364	105	374	85	136	32	93	.481	.727	0	72	80	7
Stewart	.332	80	337	61	112	13	43	.379	.549	14	51	23	0
Fletcher+	.325	68	231	23	75	12	36	.360	.537	1	17	10	3
Fullmer+	.296	89	314	50	93	20	64	.350	.561	3	45	24	0
Grebeck	.294	40	160	24	47	3	14	.352	.406	0	21	14	2
Batista	.282	97	393	69	111	31	83	.324	.575	5	76	20	12
T. Greene	.267	17	30	5	8	2	5	.313	.500	0	6	2	0
Cordova	.254	52	173	20	44	4	17	.317	.358	2	29	13	1
Gonzalez	.244	84	295	36	72	7	36	.307	.376	4	63	24	5
Cruz#	.233	105	400	58	93	22	52	.321	.468	9	86	53	3
A. Castillo	.229	49	153	13	35	1	15	.297	.294	0	28	16	0
Bush	.218	75	293	38	64	1	18	.272	.256	9	59	18	6
*Woodward	.188	32	96	15	18	3	13	.264	.354	1	26	10	0
Ducey+	.143	2	7	2	1	0	1	.250	.286	0	2	1	0

GRAND SLAMS: Fletcher (3), Batista (2), Cordova, Delgado, Fullmer (1)

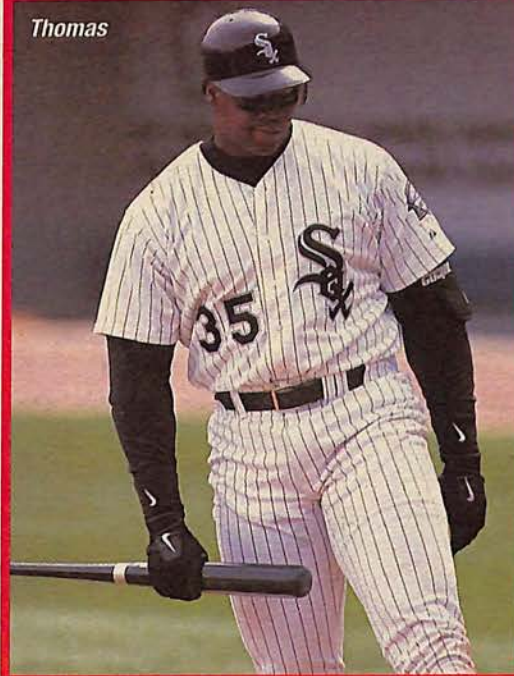
	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
Koch	2.28	5-1	45	55.1	53	16	14	4	44	15	24	.255
Wells+	3.69	16-3	22	148.2	165	67	61	13	119	22	0	.279
Painter+	3.99	1-0	29	47.1	41	23	21	7	37	15	0	.236
Quantrill	4.18	1-5	48	60.1	67	31	28	4	32	21	1	.283
F. Castillo	4.24	7-5	19	110.1	98	55	52	15	89	52	0	.236
Escobar	5.03	7-10	21	136.0	137	81	76	16	100	66	0	.264
Loaiza	5.35	6-7	22	119.1	148	75	71	21	84	34	1	.304
Frascatore	5.82	1-3	41	51.0	60	38	33	9	19	22	0	.299
Borbon+	5.97	1-1	47	31.2	38	28	21	4	26	24	0	.299
Carpenter	6.89	7-10	22	126.2	150	99	97	24	73	63	0	.297
Halladay	10.63	4-7	16	62.2	95	74	74	12	40	40	0	.348

SHUTOUTS: Escobar, Wells (1)

COMPLETE GAMES: Wells (5), Escobar (3), Carpenter (2)

INSIDE THE A.L. CENTRAL

Thomas



DUP VISHWANATH/TSN

Who's HOT

Through last Saturday, Twins 1B **David Ortiz** was hitting .500 (20-for-40) in his last 11 games. Ortiz, who long has been considered one of the team's top prospects, finally is starting to produce as expected. His homer total is low, but he's hitting a lot of doubles.

Who's NOT

Chicago 1B **Frank Thomas** was hitting .185 (5-for-27) in his last eight games through last Saturday. His confidence was so shaken he was questioning his judgment about balls and strikes. Also, he failed to collect an RBI in those eight games.

CIRCLE THE CALENDAR

Twins RHP **Brad Radke** loves it in Minnesota, but the schedule is taking him away. Starting this past Monday, the Twins faced a 10-game trip. Earlier this season, Radke defied conventional wisdom by agreeing to a four-year deal with the Twins. He has compiled a 7-11 record.

Keep an eye on

Cleveland RHP **Jaret Wright** made a rehab start last Saturday with Class AAA Buffalo. A shoulder problem has kept Wright on the D.L. since June 3. If Cleveland has any hope of a postseason berth, a healthy Wright certainly would help.

High and inside

The closer Detroit gets to .500, the more it hates losing. "When you make strides to advance to the .500 mark and then take 10 steps backward against a team like (Tampa Bay), it kind of hurts," **Jeff Weaver** says.

TSN's Wired World

When is \$75 million not \$75 million? When you're **Manny Ramirez**. Ramirez rejected a mammoth contract offer from Cleveland, saying: deferring the cash makes it less per year. For more on the Indians, visit:

sportingnews.com/baseball/teams/indians

PROSPECT WATCH

The White Sox liked what they saw from RHP **Jason Stumm** when he was mowing down batters for Centralia (Wash.) High School. But he hasn't done much since being drafted in 1999. He was 3-3 with a 5.32 ERA with Class A Burlington last year. At Burlington this year, he was 2-7 with a 4.61 ERA through last Saturday.

Chicago

63-41: 1st

There's no catch to the skills of the solid Charles Johnson



G.M. **Ron Schueler** had been looking for a veteran starting pitcher, but he acquired **C Charles Johnson** and DH **Harold Baines** from the Orioles last

Saturday for **C Brook Fordyce** and three marginal minor league pitching prospects. The key player in the trade is Johnson, who gives the team its first All-Star caliber catcher since **Carlton Fisk**. Johnson, a Gold Glove receiver, has been hitting for power this season, and he'll become another weapon on one of the league's best-hitting teams. Baines, who is with

the team for the third time in his career, provides some much-needed power from the left side. The only problem is finding Baines, 41, enough at-bats. **Frank Thomas** has been the team's primary DH, and **Paul Konerko** is entrenched at first base. Baines likely will spend most of his time pinch hitting. ... LF **Carlos Lee** ranks third on the team in RBIs, but he won't be moving up from his No. 7 spot in the order. Lee will eventually be a No. 5 hitter. For now, **Jerry Manuel** doesn't want the rookie dealing with that pressure.

SCOUTING REPORT: The team was hesitant to rush rookie LHP **Jon Garland**, 20, to the majors, but he has shown flashes of excellence. Because he relies on getting ground balls with his best pitch, the sinker, club officials were worried about how he would react to the team's erratic defense. But Garland (6-6, 205) seems to have picked up his intensity after miscues. He still needs to work on pitching up in the strike zone, but few things seem to rattle him.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: C **Mark Johnson** was in a platoon with Fordyce, but his playing time will decline significantly with the arrival of Charles Johnson. The team's first-round draft choice in '94, Mark Johnson has become a decent defensive catcher with a good batting eye. But he has not produced much offensively, even after Manuel tried to get him to be more assertive this spring. When he was drafted, the incumbent Johnson was considered a potential star. Now it looks like he's just a run-of-the-mill backup. —*Scot Gregor*

WHITE SOX

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Thomas	.331	103	372	78	123	29	90	.445	.626	0	71	80	1
Ordonez	.326	97	371	71	121	24	88	.400	.598	13	41	51	5
Graffanino	.326	37	86	19	28	0	7	.372	.419	2	12	6	2
Perry	.307	69	231	44	71	9	34	.368	.506	2	43	17	6
Konerko	.301	95	359	50	108	13	66	.365	.482	0	49	31	7
Lee	.301	97	366	71	110	19	69	.348	.527	7	61	25	3
Johnson	.294	84	286	52	84	21	55	.364	.570	2	69	32	3
Durham#	.284	101	412	82	117	13	55	.361	.464	14	73	47	13
Valentin#	.277	94	383	68	106	16	60	.336	.499	11	72	32	26
Abbott	.276	54	145	19	40	2	18	.344	.386	1	27	14	2
Baines+	.266	72	222	24	59	10	30	.349	.437	0	39	29	0
Norton#	.260	60	173	18	45	5	24	.340	.387	1	39	21	8
Singleton+	.258	97	356	58	92	8	44	.308	.393	9	60	26	3
Johnson+	.223	57	166	22	37	3	18	.310	.337	2	32	20	3

GRAND SLAMS: Ordonez, Thomas, Valentin (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
*Wunsch+	2.51	4-3	55	43.0	37	14	12	2	39	14	1	.230
*Barcelo	3.38	0-1	4	8.0	6	3	3	1	4	1	0	.207
Howry	3.60	1-2	42	45.0	31	18	18	4	43	19	5	.196
Simas	3.60	2-2	45	50.0	53	20	20	7	37	16	0	.283
Foulke	3.69	1-0	47	61.0	53	27	25	8	62	18	19	.232
Parque+	3.95	9-4	21	120.2	140	66	53	15	74	39	0	.287
Sirotko+	3.99	9-8	21	128.2	132	72	57	17	87	44	0	.272
Baldwin	4.44	12-4	20	131.2	131	68	65	28	89	39	0	.259
*Buehrle+	5.94	1-0	4	16.2	26	11	11	3	13	8	0	.347
Lowe	6.46	3-1	41	39.0	51	32	28	5	33	27	0	.317
*Garland	6.75	2-2	5	21.1	23	19	16	3	14	13	0	.274

SHUTOUTS: Baldwin, Eldred (1)

COMPLETE GAMES: Baldwin, Eldred (2), Sirotko (1)

Cleveland

52-49: 2nd

Flurry of trades gives club a shot at the wild card



G.M. **John Hart**'s deals last week, acquiring two starters (RHPs **Jason Bere** and **Steve Woodard**), a closer (RHP **Bob Wickman**) and two hitters (1B/OF **David Segui** and OF **Wil Cordero**), put the club within reach of the wild card. Bere and Woodard arrive with shaky numbers, but they have to be an improvement over the parade of kids and castoffs that have been used. The team says it scouted both pitchers heavily. Bere, a free agent after the season, has a good breaking ball and fastball but is

JULY'S GRADES

OFFENSE	C
The team hopes the new bats will provide some spark in the last two months.	
PITCHING	C
The team picked up help in the rotation and bullpen, but will it be enough?	
DEFENSE	A
Playing David Segui at first base would give the team the game's best infield defense.	

inconsistent. The team doesn't expect Woodard to be a No. 1, 2 or 3 starter but believes he can fit in at the back of the rotation. He was 10-12 in 1998 and 11-8 in 1999, figures the team will gladly take. He relies on off-speed stuff, and his changeup is his best pitch. Wickman is not overpowering but has plenty of experience and won't back down from the closer role. His presence means **Steve Karsay** can go back to the setup role, where he flourished last season. Segui will see action at first, DH and the outfield. Cordero will play a lot in left field, where he's below average.

SCOUTING REPORT: The lineup has been filled with too many high-strikeout, low-average hitters. That's one reason the offensive production has been down. It's hoped the additions of Segui and Cordero will change that. Both hit for high average and can drive in runs. Segui and Cordero, who will hit anywhere from fifth to seventh in the lineup, will extend rallies and keep teams from pitching around RF **Manny Ramirez**. Both will add a dimension that has been missing.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: Cordero will help, but the deal with the Pirates was a surprise. He had a decent season in Cleveland last year, but the team showed little interest in re-signing him. **Richie Sexson**'s emergence last year was one reason. A few months later, the team thought Cordero's bat looked better than Sexson's. Re-acquiring Cordero cost the team utility IF **Enrique Wilson** and backup OF **Alex Ramirez**, who both had bright futures in their roles. —*Steve Herrick*

INDIANS

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Segui#	.338	94	355	52	120	11	57	.392	.518	0	51	34	0
M. Ramirez	.328	62	238	48	78	22	70	.426	.681	1	70	42	1
Fryman	.318	94	346	57	110	15	61	.400	.526	0	73	49	4
Alomar Jr.	.306	56	206	24	63	4	24	.347	.437	0	29	11	7
Cabrera	.292	51	120	14	35	0	8	.320	.333	3	11	5	1
Vizquel#	.287	95	387	58	111	6	43	.365	.403	15	48	47	1
Thome+	.277	98	343	69	95	27	64	.399	.583	1	109	69	4
Diaz	.274	49	169	18	46	3	17	.320	.402	2	17	5	3
Alomar#	.269	94	375	63	101	10	45	.337	.416	24	50	36	9
Lofton+	.259	76	290	48	75	7	35	.358	.400	15	48	45	2
*Brayan+	.230	41	122	23	28	13	27	.336	.590	0	55	17	2
Selby+	.167	2	6	2	1	0	0	.167	.333	0	0	0	0
Cordero	.000	1	4	0	0	0	0	.000	.000	0	0	0	0

GRAND SLAMS: M. Ramirez (2), Brayan, Sexson, Vizquel (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
Woodard	1.50	0-1	1	6.0	4	1	1	1	4	1	0	.211
*Caimcross+	2.25	0-0	5	4.0	6	1	1	0	2	2	0	.375
Speier	2.63	1-1	24	37.2	26	11	11	4	42	11	0	.197
Shuey	2.76	3-1	27	32.2	27	11	10	2	33	12	0	.223
Karsay	3.15	2-5	41	45.2	46	17	16	4	42	11	19	.261
Finley+	3.82	9-7	21	141.1	127	64	60	15	130	65	0	.241
Bere	3.86	1-0	1	7.0	8	3	3	1	6	0	0	.276
Colon	4.49	9-8	18	108.1	104	56	54	17	125	60	0	.254
Brewington	5.09	3-0	15	23.0	24	14	13	1	16	12	0	.276
Burba	5.18	10-4	20	121.2	129	71	70	15	121	61	0	.272
Reed	5.35	1-0	36	33.2	40	22	20	7	25	14	0	.290
Wickman	-	0-0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-

SHUTOUTS: Wright (1)

COMPLETE GAMES: Finley (3), Colon, Wright (1)

Detroit

47-55: 3rd

There's no ace, only holes, in this downtrodden rotation



The rotation is starting to show wear from the season. In a recent 12-game stretch, RHP Willie Blair had the rotation's only two victories,

JULY'S GRADES

OFFENSE C

As in consistently inconsistent. A shutout loss to pitching-poor K.C. underlines the problems.

PITCHING C

The team averaged a whopping seven runs allowed in a nine-game span.

DEFENSE B

Unearned runs were allowed in four straight games, totaling eight runs.

off-speed stuff and ease his overreliance on his split-finger fastball. There are encouraging signs, especially from RHP Jeff Weaver, who's learning to work hitters in and out while improving against lefty hitters. The presence of promising LHP Adam Pettyjohn and RHP Adam Bernero offers hope. But it's clear the club must acquire an ace. ... 1B Hal Morris is bringing just what team officials hoped when he was acquired: base hits, smart at-bats and consistency. Three hits last Saturday lifted him to .324—with a .405 on-base percentage. ... RHP Nelson Cruz's unexpected dominance since his late June call-up gives the bullpen depth—and maybe a closer. He throws strikes, varies his patterns and has hitters guessing.

SCOUTING REPORT: Reliever Erik Hiljus is at a crucial point in his career but is pitching for an organization that might not be the best fit for him. At 27, he must establish himself on a team that has at least six relievers ahead of him. Hiljus' biggest problem has been inconsistency with his curveball, leaving him too reliant on his fastball.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: Don't read too much into it when Phil Garner occasionally rests LF Bobby Higginson against tough lefthanders. After some mighty struggles against lefties early in his career, Higginson has shown he can hold his own against them. Entering the week, he was hitting .253 against lefties with only 15 strikeouts in 95 at-bats. Besides, the club doesn't lose much with Wendell Magee in left. —Reid Creager

TIGERS

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Morris+	.324	12	37	5	12	0	3	.405	.378	0	8	5	1
Magee	.309	47	94	14	29	5	18	.343	.500	0	14	5	0
D. Cruz	.294	98	360	40	106	5	48	.312	.433	1	24	9	11
Higginson+	.292	95	359	59	105	20	66	.375	.563	9	52	48	6
Encarnacion	.284	89	348	45	99	8	38	.330	.408	9	51	20	4
Gonzalez	.282	70	280	42	79	14	37	.334	.525	0	45	21	0
Polonia+	.273	80	267	37	73	6	25	.325	.416	8	25	22	0
Macias#	.264	38	87	11	23	1	12	.319	.345	0	10	7	2
Halter	.261	70	157	12	41	1	13	.289	.331	5	35	6	6
Palmer	.261	89	322	45	84	19	56	.344	.484	0	95	38	16
Ausmus	.247	94	336	46	83	6	35	.348	.363	6	52	47	2
Becker+	.243	78	202	43	49	6	27	.382	.376	1	63	47	6
Easley	.239	69	251	37	60	8	24	.344	.394	8	52	35	1
*Cardona	.167	11	18	0	3	0	0	.167	.167	0	4	0	0

GRAND SLAMS: Macias, Palmer (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
N. Cruz	1.75	3-0	11	25.2	18	5	5	1	22	3	0	.205
Jones	2.15	0-1	40	37.2	33	9	9	2	41	9	28	.244
Anderson	4.04	3-1	48	49.0	38	27	22	4	46	31	0	.218
Brocail	4.14	5-3	41	45.2	51	23	21	5	35	14	0	.285
Weaver	4.45	6-9	19	121.1	129	64	60	16	76	35	0	.274
Moehler	4.76	6-7	17	104.0	138	63	55	16	76	20	0	.319
Blair	4.86	7-2	31	92.2	100	51	50	15	43	23	0	.275
Nomo	5.10	4-10	24	139.1	147	81	79	24	132	69	0	.273
Nitkowski+	5.60	4-7	34	80.1	97	61	50	11	60	34	0	.298
Sparks	6.55	0-2	7	22.0	27	19	16	3	7	10	1	.297
*Hiljus	7.36	0-0	3	3.2	5	3	3	1	2	1	0	.333

SHUTOUTS: None

COMPLETE GAMES: Moehler, Nomo, Weaver (1)

Kansas City

47-56: 4th

Stein encountering bumps on road back from injury



RHP Blake Stein, who was counted on to be an integral member of the rotation, is still trying to find his form. He missed nearly the entire

JULY'S GRADES

OFFENSE B

Double digits in runs five times in July, but the Royals could use a few more homers.

PITCHING D

Starting pitching aside, that collective team ERA of 5.70 in July is an eyesore. Again.

DEFENSE C

Injuries to Feibles, Beltran, key ingredients up the middle, weaken a frustrating defense.

change. He's a strong pitcher who, despite making his first starts of the year, is already throwing an average of 108 pitches per start. ... CF Carlos Beltran, who is suffering from a bruised right knee, got encouraging news last week. He underwent an MRI last Friday, and the bruise showed signs of healing. More important, there is little or no damage to the cartilage. Entering the week, Beltran was scheduled to begin a rehabilitation assignment in Florida. The Royals still aren't counting on Beltran to return to the big-league club until early September.

SCOUTING REPORT: The big problem for RHP Dan Reichert continues to be one of control. He has shown flashes of brilliance. But the Royals need him to harness control of his sinking slider and bury fewer pitches into the dirt. Reichert ranks second only to Hideo Nomo with 12 wild pitches. For the season, Reichert has walked 48 batters in 81 innings. He has also hit six batters.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: In their continued efforts to bolster the worst pitching staff in the A.L.—statistically speaking, anyway—the Royals promoted RHP Kris Wilson from Class AA Wichita. The move was a surprise, because the Royals have many arms in the pipeline that are more promising. The Royals decided, however, to let RHP Jeff Austin and LHP Chris George continue to develop. Wilson, who was 7-3 with a 3.51 ERA in 21 games, was inserted into a long-relief role and promptly threw two innings of scoreless relief in his major league debut last Friday. —Steve Rock

ROYALS

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
*Ortiz	.375	4	16	5	6	0	0	.412	.563	0	1	1	1
Sweeney	.345	103	406	66	140	16	90	.410	.522	6	44	40	8
Randa	.319	102	386	58	123	11	63	.368	.466	5	43	32	12
Dye	.311	98	373	67	116	26	78	.378	.595	0	57	42	3
Damon+	.310	101	406	83	126	9	50	.377	.456	29	40	49	4
Quinn	.290	82	300	46	87	14	48	.347	.500	2	55	26	2
McCarty	.287	62	150	19	43	9	34	.343	.540	0	38	14	4
Feibles	.285	62	235	45	67	2	20	.368	.366	11	30	26	8
Reboullet	.261	48	138	22	36	0	12	.352	.304	1	22	20	6
Sanchez	.255	94	330	42	84	1	25	.291	.306	2	42	16	2
Zaun#	.235	45	132	19	31	5	20	.353	.371	5	18	23	2
Ordaz	.227	41	75	12	17	0	7	.259	.240	3	9	3	0
Dunwoody+	.222	32	90	4	20	1	15	.265	.289	2	20	6	1
Pose+	.171	36	41	5	7	0	1	.261	.171	0	11	5	0

GRAND SLAMS: Dye, Fabebras, McCarty (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
*Wilson	0.00	0-0	1	2.0	2	0	0	0	1	2	0	.333
Larkin	1.69	0-0	4	5.1	4	1	1	1	4	3	0	.222
Suzuki	3.73	5-6	21	123.0	117	58	51	18	92	57	0	.248
*Reichert	4.22	4-6	32	81.0	74	45	38	7	56	48	2	.247
Bottalico	4.44	7-2	40	52.2	47	26	26	7	41	25	8	.237
Spradlin	4.76	4-2	41	62.1	59	35	33	7	46	23	7	.259
Suppan	5.49	5-6	23	132.2	147	82	81	28	86	51	0	.279
Witasick	5.94	3-8	22	89.1	109	65	59	15	67	38	0	.301
Stein	7.28	1-3	5	29.2	34	25	24	7	28	15	0	.283
*Durbin	7.99	2-5	15	71.0	90	68	63	14	37	39	0	.303
Byrdak+	10.13	0-1	6	2.2	3	3	3	3	3	3	0	.273

SHUTOUTS: Reichert (1)

COMPLETE GAMES: Witasick (2), Reichert (1)

Minnesota

48-58: 5th

Allen's demotion to minors leads to outfield shuffle



OF Chad Allen's future with the team appears shaky. Despite a .300 average in 15 games since being recalled from the minors, he was

JULY'S GRADES

OFFENSE C

Still lacks power, but improved since Ortiz moved into middle of the batting order.

PITCHING B

Starters Radke, Milton, Redman and Mays have been superb the past two weeks.

DEFENSE C

The club has cut down on errors, but the outfield lost several fly balls recently.

improve the outfield's defense. ... The domino effect of the roster change allows manager Tom Kelly to move OF Matt Lawton from left to right and Jacques Jones from center to left. Hunter will play center. The question is whether Hunter can hit enough to keep the job. He batted .207 before being demoted in late May but posted impressive numbers at Class AAA (.368, 18 homers and 61 RBIs in 55 games). He has returned with a new stance—leaning more toward the catcher to give him a split-second of extra time.

SCOUTING REPORT: As recently as last season, LHP Mark Redman looked like a bust. Now, he is the club's most consistent starter. What happened? He realized a few years ago he had to stop relying on his best pitch, a circle changeup. He started throwing more fastballs and building arm strength, which helps produce a 90-mph fastball, and added a curve. He uses his fastball, often throwing it inside, to set up his changeup—a reversal of strategy from his early career. He refined his curve and has three pitches to keep batters off-balance.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: It won't show in C Chad Moeller's .192 average, but the club is much more impressed with him. Initially, he seemed awed by the majors after being called up June 20, and it showed mostly in his concentration behind the plate. But lately, he appears to have calmed down and focused on the mental aspect that comes with catching. Coaches think his improved focus and pitch-calling are a vital part of the pitching staff's recent hot streak. —Dennis Brackin

TWINS

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Lawton+	.331	106	390	61	129	7	64	.433	.474	23	46	68	3
Cummings+	.309	63	136	21	42	3	17	.365	.441	0	17	9	0
Koskie+	.304	92	296	52	90	6	46	.407	.463	3	68	52	7
Ortiz+	.298	76	218	34	65	5	38	.395	.468	1	36	37	0
Jones+	.296	100	345	46	102	15	51	.327	.484	4	73	16	1
Hocking#	.288	84	236	38	68	2	30	.363	.407	4	49	30	2
Coomer	.285	96	372	48	106	13	65	.336	.452	2	34	27	2
Canizaro	.280	67	236	33	66	5	24	.333	.424	2	36	19	4
Guzman#	.264	103	413	62	109	7	40	.320	.421	17	60	35	13
*Maxwell	.244	42	82	10	20	1	10	.309	.305	1	27	8	4
Jensen#	.209	52	139	16	29	3	14	.325	.338	0	36	24	2
Hunter	.204	47	142	14	29	0	9	.245	.296	1	33	7	2
*Moeller	.192	25	78	9	15	1	6	.241	.244	1	17	5	3

GRAND SLAMS: None

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
Hawkins	3.56	2-2	43	60.2	61	25	24	7	42	19	7	.261
Wells	3.67	0-6	52	54.0	56	25	22	9	56	10	7	.265
Guardado+	3.76	4-3	48	38.1	34	16	16	8	34	17	6	.238
Carrasco	4.12	3-2	47	54.2	59	28	25	5	39	21	1	.278
Radke	4.18	7-11	23	159.1	168	78	74	17	100	36	0	.269
Miller+	4.33	1-2	46	43.2	58	24	21	3	42	26	1	.315
*Redman+	4.36	9-4	24	107.1	118	53	52	17	86	32	0	.277
Milton+	4.87	10-6	23	140.1	139	82	76	23	114	27	0	.253
Mays	5.51	6-11	22	127.1	150	83	78	16	80	60	0	.294
*Santana+	6.20	2-2	20	53.2	59	38	37	8	44	39	0	.282
*Ryan	11.57	0-1	7	11.2	21	17	15	6	8	5	0	.375
*Romero+	-	0-0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-

SHUTOUTS: Mays (1)

COMPLETE GAMES: Radke (2), Mays (1)

INSIDE THE

Kapler



Anaheim

56-49: 3rd

Rubber-man reliever paces the team's pitching staff



Of reliever **Shigetoshi Hasegawa's** 44 appearances this season through last Saturday, 19 were for two or more innings. Twice this season, he

JULY'S GRADES

OFFENSE B+

The offense is one of the A.L.'s best, which has helped the club overcome bad starting pitching.

PITCHING C+

The rotation had a 10.07 ERA from July 22-29, but the bullpen had a strong month.

DEFENSE B

SSs Benji Gil and Kevin Stocker solidify the infield; team ranks second in A.L. in double plays.

pitched on three consecutive days. His resiliency and mental toughness may be the biggest reasons he has been the Angels' most valuable pitcher this season. Through last Saturday, he had a scoreless streak of 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ innings over 11 games. He has had excellent command of his fastball, which has topped out at 93 mph, and he has kept his breaking balls down in the strike zone. Most important, he recognizes what is working best for him on certain days and has learned how to be effective on the days he doesn't have his best stuff, stressing control and location when he's tired instead of trying to overpower batters. ... 3B **Troy Glaus**' average has been on a steady decline since he missed two games (June 25-26) because of lower back stiffness. But his power numbers remain good—he had seven homers in July through last Saturday and led the team with 31.

SCOUTING REPORT: In acquiring OF **Ron Gant** from the Phillies for RHP **Kent Bottenfield**, the Angels added punch to an already formidable lineup. Gant, who is in the final year of his contract, was leading the Phillies with 20 homers, but he had only 38 RBIs in 89 games. He will replace **Scott Spiezio**, who was hitting .250 with 10 homers and 30 RBIs in 224 at-bats, as the team's primary DH. A playoffs veteran, Gant adds much-needed postseason experience to the team.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: CF **Darin Erstad** arrives at the park for 7 p.m. games at around 12:30 p.m., and his lengthy pregame routine includes weightlifting, whirlpool treatments, a card game with teammates, hitting off a tee and usually an hour or so in the video room to study opposing pitchers. Erstad looks at everything, and not just from that night's opposing pitcher. He also studies video of relievers he is unfamiliar with, and he occasionally will use video to dissect his swing. —Mike DiGiovanna

ANGELS

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Erstad+	.369	104	452	80	167	19	77	.423	.580	18	53	42	3
Palmeiro+	.329	68	140	24	46	0	13	.415	.421	1	11	20	1
Vaughn+	.292	104	401	61	117	26	81	.381	.544	2	112	49	8
*Kennedy+	.283	102	399	60	113	7	45	.322	.431	14	51	21	10
*Molina	.281	84	303	40	85	12	49	.316	.439	1	24	15	5
Glaus	.280	103	361	75	101	31	68	.397	.607	10	108	69	18
Salmon	.269	101	360	70	97	22	59	.394	.514	0	87	69	3
Anderson+	.263	102	418	60	110	30	75	.284	.531	5	59	14	1
Spiezio#	.250	84	224	32	56	10	30	.339	.429	1	41	29	2
Stocker#	.248	66	206	30	51	2	15	.370	.354	1	52	37	13
Walbeck#	.233	34	103	16	24	6	10	.269	.447	0	12	5	1
Gil	.226	79	235	20	53	4	17	.300	.340	9	46	23	15
Clemente	.218	44	78	3	17	0	5	.228	.244	0	27	0	0

GRAND SLAMS: Anderson, Kennedy, Molina, Salmon (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
Fyhrle	2.31	0-0	22	39.0	42	10	3	29	8	0	284	
Levine	3.13	2-3	40	72.0	69	27	25	8	30	32	2	.254
Holtz+	3.70	1-2	37	24.1	20	11	10	1	24	11	0	.233
Percival	3.82	4-4	41	37.2	38	16	5	34	22	25	.243	
Hasegawa	3.88	7-2	44	65.0	74	32	28	10	41	27	3	.288
Petkovsek	4.62	3-2	38	48.2	45	25	3	22	17	1	.253	
*Etherton	4.76	5-1	9	51.0	49	28	27	14	26	18	0	.246
*Cooper	5.05	4-5	12	73.0	82	48	41	10	33	26	0	.284
Schoeneweis+	5.18	5-5	15	97.1	102	63	56	13	38	35	0	.271
*Turnbow	5.50	0-0	13	18.0	22	11	11	4	11	17	0	.301
Bottenfield	5.71	7-8	21	127.2	144	82	81	25	75	56	0	.285
Hill	6.56	5-6	15	72.2	95	54	53	15	48	50	0	.322

SHUTOUTS: Cooper, Schoeneweis (1)

COMPLETE GAMES: Cooper, Schoeneweis (1)

Oakland

56-47: 2nd

Mecir should prove valuable; he's tough on lefthanders



The key attraction for the A's in acquiring righthanded reliever **Jim Mecir** from the Devil Rays is his ability to retire righthanders (198

JULY'S GRADES

OFFENSE C-

The team has been inconsistent and hasn't been manufacturing runs.

PITCHING B-

The additions of Barry Zito and Jim Mecir will boost what already was a fine staff.

DEFENSE D-

The A's fielding has dropped off; they led the majors in errors through last Saturday.

opponents' batting average) and lefthanders (.205). Mecir throws a screwball, which allows him to be effective against lefthanders. Because of the team's lack of a competent lefty, it will have to count on Mecir against lefties, who are batting better than .300 against every member of the Oakland bullpen except closer **Jason Istringhausen** (.238).

RHP **Jesús Colome** was a

steep price to pay for Mecir because he was the A's top pitching prospect once LHP **Barry Zito** was called up to the majors. But Mecir has three years remaining until he is a free agent, and if he helps get the A's into the postseason, he will have been worth the gamble of trading Colome, 22, who has a 100-mph fastball. Mecir also will take some of the load off setup man RHP **Jeff Tam**, who has been overused and started to tire in July.

SCOUTING REPORT: OF **Ryan Christenson** probably could start on some teams, but in many respects, he's a perfect fourth outfielder, often playing left field in the late innings when **Ben Grieve** is removed. Christenson is known for his defense, which generally is superb, and he can play all three spots well because of his speed and the excellent jumps he gets on balls. He also gives the slow A's one fast pinch runner. He still has some upside, and the A's love his attitude and work ethic.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: RHP **Kevin Appier's** win last Saturday was his first since June 23. In the win against Boston, he threw seven scoreless innings, allowing just four hits. Appier broke out of the slump after getting together with pitching coach **Rick Peterson** to watch some of his best games in the early '90s. He started making various mechanical adjustments and decided to go back to throwing his hands over his head at the start of his delivery in order to keep his weight over his feet better. He had been starting his delivery with his hands more at chest-level, and he thought he needed something to help him stay back more. —Susan Slusser

ATHLETICS

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
*Piatt	.358	19	53	11	19	3	14	.414	.660	0	9	5	0
Ja. Giambi+	.330	102	351	74	116	26	91	.465	.618	2	65	91	4
Saenz	.311	64	196	37	61	8	30	.390	.510	1	38	20	4
Velarde	.300	70	283	48	85	8	27	.381	.442	7	50	36	9
Grieve+	.286	102	388	62	111	19	72	.358	.505	2	81	44	3
Christenson	.284	76	95	23	27	3	14	.382	.442	1	24	14	4
*Long+	.279	80	326	64	91	11	46	.342	.451	2	39	31	6
Chavez+	.271	96	303	54	82	14	46	.353	.472	0	55	41	13
Tejada	.266	102	391	68	104	19	78	.334	.471	5	70	38	17
*Menechino	.252	46	111	25	28	5	19	.331	.459	1	38	14	3
Je. Giambi+	.246	68	187	27	46	8	38	.330	.406	0	46	22	3
Hernandez	.230	91	265	35	61	12	41	.311	.396	0	44	31	7
Stairs+	.224	92	322	52	72	16	53	.333	.425	4	89	53	4
Fasano	.191	33	89	10	17	3	9	.277	.348	0	31	10	2

GRAND SLAMS: Ja. Giambi (3), Grieve (2), Chavez, Je. Giambi, Stairs, Tejada (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
*Zito+	3.00	1-0	2	12.0	6	4	4	1	11	10	0	.146
Tam	3.03	3-3	46	65.1	68	23	22	1	36	16	2	.280
Mecir	3.08	7-2	38	49.2	35	17	17	2	33	22	1	.201
Istringhausen	3.47	4-3	43	46.2	45	21	18	4	40	19	22	.251
Heredia	3.87	12-7	21	132.2	142	67	57	15	69	45	0	.273
Appier	4.46	9-8	20	127.0	136	73	63	14	85	67	0	.270
Hudson	4.56	11-3	20	122.1	108	65	62	19	108	61	0	.239
D. Jones	4.99	2-1	34	48.2	61	29	27	6	38	8	2	.302
*Mulder+	5.03	6-7	19	112.2	134	76	63	16	65	49	0	.297
Magnante+	5.26	1-1	35	25.2	32	17	15	3	9	15	0	.308
Mathews	6.22	2-2	39	46.1	54	32	32	8	31	21	0	.292

SHUTOUTS: Appier (1)

COMPLETE GAMES: Appier, Heredia, Olivares (1)

Who's HOT

Rangers OF **Gabe Kapler** entered the week with a .369 average since the All-Star break. He had a double Saturday, extending his hitting streak to 13. He also homered and had two hits in four consecutive games during July 24-27.

Who's NOT

Through Saturday, Anaheim 3B **Troy Glaus** was hitting .213 (13-for-61) with six homers and eight RBIs since the All-Star break. In a six-game road trip to Texas and Oakland that ended last week, Glaus hit .095 (2-for-21) with nine strikeouts.

CIRCLE THE CALENDAR

Oakland plays 13 consecutive games against Detroit and Cleveland starting August 11. The Athletics hit .211 in three games against Detroit this season, and Oakland pitchers have a 6.28 ERA in six games against Cleveland. **Jason Giambi** has 18 homers against the Tigers, including three this season.

Keep an eye on

Through Saturday, Seattle's **Aaron Sele** had lost all three of his starts since the All-Star break. In 18 innings, he allowed 17 hits, 15 runs and nine walks. Sele believes he is creating too much movement in the starting position of his windup.

High and inside

With Rangers C **Ivan Rodriguez** out for the season, there are clubhouse whispers that having **Bill Hasselman** catch the final two months could be a plus. The Rangers' staff has a better ERA with Hasselman.

TSN's Wired World

Believe it or not, reliever **Shigetoshi Hasegawa** had the Angels' best record through Saturday at 7-2. He may be the most valuable pitcher on the staff. For more on the Angels, visit:

sportingnews.com/baseball/teams/angels

PROSPECT WATCH

OF **Kevin Mench**, Texas' fourth-round selection in 1999, was known as a home run hitter at the University of Delaware. He has simply become known as a hitter since joining the Rangers. Mench is hitting .303 at Class A Charlotte and is among the Florida State League leaders in home runs (15) and RBIs (77).

Seattle

60-43: 1st

Overly patient hitters find walks are preventing runs



The offense continues to lead the majors in one category—bases on balls. With 509 walks in their first 103 games, Seattle hitters are the

most patient in the league, but that hasn't always been a good thing. 1B **John Olerud**, for instance, acknowledges that among his 77 walks this year, he occasionally has taken ball four he could have hit. With the team's lack of production behind 3-4-5 hitters SS **Alex Rodriguez**, DH **Edgar Martinez** and Olerud, that often has meant that even though Olerud reaches base, the

rally dies. Olerud has tried to be aggressive, but with a great eye at the plate, his instincts are to take pitches he thinks are out of the strike zone. ... C **Joe Oliver** has been a surprising factor since coming up from the minors to fill in for **Tom Lampkin**. In Oliver's first 23 starts, the team went 16-7, and it wasn't only his pitch-calling that helped. He has batted .274 with seven doubles, six homers and 17 RBIs in 32 games.

SCOUTING REPORT: LHP **Robert Ramsay**, acquired last season from Boston for OF **Butch Huskey**, has pitched his way into the middle-relief mix. Early on this season, Ramsay's control was a problem for him and he tended to nibble at the plate, especially against righties. He has become far more aggressive, and the result has been impressive. He has stranded 23 of 26 inherited baserunners. For the season, Ramsay, 26, has held hitters to a .192 batting average. Looking ahead, his future may lie in the starting rotation. For now, with the team's depth of starters, he's learning the league from the bullpen.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: DH **Edgar Martinez** has for years taken pregame batting practice with a weighted doughnut still on his bat. This year, he has picked up a drill used by OF **Rickey Henderson**, who slides a 10-pound weight over his bat and swings it before getting into the cage. Martinez insists that by swinging the heavy weight outside the cage, his bat feels light when he hits. That's especially important late in the season when hitters wear down physically. —Larry LaRue

MARINERS

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Martinez	.350	94	337	69	118	25	97	.439	.641	0	53	56	0
A. Rodriguez	.345	89	336	87	116	24	79	.442	.628	8	69	60	4
Olerud+	.289	103	363	63	105	11	75	.410	.477	0	65	77	3
Oliver	.274	32	95	15	26	6	17	.317	.537	2	18	6	1
Javier#	.274	65	223	43	61	4	27	.358	.399	4	42	31	1
Cameron	.267	98	352	63	94	12	45	.360	.443	9	90	46	4
Buhner	.258	81	252	34	65	18	61	.386	.524	0	65	50	0
Henderson	.254	53	193	33	49	4	21	.356	.363	17	37	30	1
Wilson	.246	57	171	19	42	3	16	.301	.339	0	26	14	4
Mabry+	.243	47	103	18	25	1	7	.322	.320	0	31	10	4
Bell	.233	95	331	36	77	6	35	.301	.353	2	52	29	10
McLemore#	.232	94	328	49	76	2	30	.349	.293	21	54	60	5
Ibanez+	.229	62	109	15	25	1	11	.317	.321	1	19	13	2
*Guillen#	.221	42	131	20	29	1	12	.306	.275	1	30	15	7

GRAND SLAMS: Martinez (2), Cameron, Lampkin, Oliver, A. Rodriguez (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	AVG
*Ramsay+	2.86	1-1	24	34.2	23	11	11	2	22	25	0	.192
Rhodes+	3.17	3-5	48	48.1	35	18	17	4	52	19	0	.203
*Sasaki	3.32	1-5	42	40.2	28	18	15	7	53	22	25	.189
Paniagua	4.01	1-0	44	51.2	41	23	23	4	46	27	1	.228
Garcia	4.11	3-1	9	50.1	50	25	23	6	37	25	0	.265
Abbott	4.21	6-4	23	104.2	93	50	49	15	73	44	0	.239
Moyer+	4.23	11-3	15	93.2	95	45	44	13	64	25	0	.261
Tomko	4.31	5-3	20	62.2	58	31	30	8	49	23	0	.249
Sele	4.43	11-6	21	132.0	128	68	65	9	84	50	0	.257
Halama+	4.93	9-5	19	104.0	130	64	57	9	60	39	0	.313
Mesa	5.40	3-5	42	50.0	56	30	30	8	60	25	1	.283

SHUTOUTS: Halama, Meche, Sele (1)

COMPLETE GAMES: Halama, Meche, Sele (1)

Texas

50-52: 4th

Getting Ledee might help to give club some options



Proclaiming it a deal for the present and the future, the Rangers acquired OF **Ricky Ledee** from Cleveland for 1B/DH **David Segui**. The Rangers

made the trade because Segui can be a free agent at the end of the season, and the Rangers didn't envision paying him \$5 million or more on a long-term contract to be a DH, especially because top prospect **Carlos Pena** could be ready for first base in the majors sometime next season. Plus, Ledee gives the Rangers protection in the outfield in case OF **Ruben Mateo** suffers a

setback from a broken leg. If Mateo's recovery stays on schedule, the Rangers could deal Ledee this offseason. The team made the deal thinking it could come close to replacing Segui's production with Ledee and hot-hitting IF **Frank Catalanotto**. It should be noted that Segui has a history of second-half swoons—hitting 20 points lower in the second half annually. ... The Rangers want to find out what Catalanotto, who leads the A.L. with nine pinch hits, can do. He went into the week with a .377 average and could be the DH next season if he proves he can handle the everyday workload. He could be the team's second baseman if **Luis Alicea** isn't re-signed.

SCOUTING REPORT: The book on IF **Scott Sheldon** used to be that he didn't have enough range to be an asset as a defensive substitution and didn't have a swing conducive to coming off the bench. Those factors combined to get him only 41 big-league at-bats the last three seasons. This year, he has played all four infield positions and catcher and hasn't made an error. Offensively, he seems to have shortened his stroke—he was hitting .283 with six extra-base hits.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: Ledee arrived last Saturday. Classes began immediately. Instructor **Rudy Jaramillo**, who speaks fluent Spanish, has a habit of getting the most out of hitters (**Juan Gonzalez** was his pet project). Jaramillo is expected to spend a lot of the final two months working closely with Ledee to extract the most power he can from Ledee's swing. —Evan Grant

RANGERS

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Catalanotto+	.377	51	106	23	40	6	19	.477	.623	4	12	17	5
Alicea#	.302	91	354	53	107	3	46	.377	.412	1	53	40	11
*Lamb+	.287	83	293	45	84	5	33	.343	.406	0	41	23	20
Greer+	.285	61	239	39	68	4	35	.359	.427	0	40	28	3
*Sheldon	.283	29	53	9	15	2	10	.367	.472	0	14	7	0
Palmeiro+	.279	99	358	62	100	28	83	.384	.561	2	48	61	1
Kapler	.277	67	253	36	70	9	29	.332	.455	6	34	21	7
Haselman	.273	24	66	7	18	1	11	.300	.424	0	10	3	2
Martinez+	.269	66	219	26	59	3	24	.341	.374	3	37	24	0
Curtis	.257	76	237	32	61	7	33	.332	.439	2	47	28	4
Clayton	.247	95	336	53	83	14	43	.305	.432	7	62	27	10
Ledee+	.235	80	255	36	60	9	39	.325	.408	7	48	34	2
Green#	.188	45	48	12	9	0	3	.250	.208	4	13	4	0
*Waszgis	.000	1	1	0	0	0	0	.000	.000	0	0	0	0

GRAND SLAMS: Clayton, Rodriguez (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	AVG
Venafro+	3.63	1-0	52	39.2	43	17	16	1	18	13	0	.289
Helling	3.87	12-7	23	149.0	140	77	64	16	99	65	0	.243
Wetteland	4.36	4-3	45	43.1	49	24	21	8	35	15	26	.285
Rogers+	4.47	10-8	22	151.0	172	83	75	15	83	41	0	.289
Glynn	4.84	2-1	6	35.1	30	21	19	7	12	18	0	.227
*Cordero	5.18	1-1	40	48.2	59	30	28	6	35	33	0	.301
Zimmerman	5.48	3-4	44	44.1	43	29	27	7	51	23	1	.291
Crabtree	5.50	1-6	43	52.1	63	37	32	4	37	18	0	.297
Perisho+	6.20	2-3	20	65.1	76	53	45	13	44	45	0	.298
Oliver+	6.75	2-5	15	82.2	107	67	62	14	43	32	0	.320
*Davis+	6.82	4-2	16	34.1	32	27	26	9	33	25	0	.237

SHUTOUTS: None

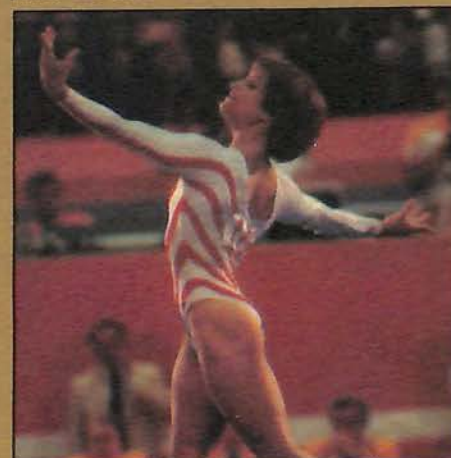
COMPLETE GAMES: Rogers (1)



Where Are They Now?

For 25 years, the Hershey's Track and Field Youth Program has been encouraging children in the United States and Canada to be the best they can be. Through basic track and field events, the program instills a sense of pride in oneself and teaches respect for others.

In 1979, Mary Lou Retton participated at the National Finals of Hershey's Track and Field Youth Program. Mary Lou, a determined 11-year old, competed in the 50-yard dash and won 2nd place. The same commitment to excellence



Mary Lou Retton, 1984 Summer Olympics

displayed in Hershey brought her to the 1984 Summer Olympics, where she stole our hearts and became the first American woman to win a gold medal in gymnastics. It is the only gold medal ever won by an American in the All-Around. She added two silver medals in team and vault and two bronze medals in uneven bars and floor exercise. Her five medals were the most won by an American athlete in 1984.



In 1986, Mary Lou retired from gymnastics. She was married in 1990 and is now expecting her third child. Today, she brings her inspiration to people across the country as one of the most sought after motivational speakers and corporate spokespersons.

HERSHEY'S



Athletics Canada
Athlétisme Canada



INSIDE THE N.L. EAST

Rolen



DILIP VISHWANATH / TSN

Who's HOT

In his first three starts with Atlanta, **Andy Ashby** fit right into the star-studded rotation. His three victories included complete games against the Orioles and Mets. Ashby has helped the Braves' pitching staff compile a 3.30 ERA since the All-Star break.

Who's NOT

Montreal 2B **Jose Vidro** had a stellar first half—.375, 15 home runs, 62 RBIs—but has slumped severely since the All-Star Game. Through Saturday, he was batting .206 with zero homers, six RBIs and four doubles since the break.

CIRCLE THE CALENDAR

The Mets begin a stretch of 17 consecutive games against NL West clubs Aug. 11. First up is an eight-game homestand against the Giants and Rockies. New York is 11-13 against NL West clubs this season and was swept in a four-game series May 1-4 at San Francisco, getting outscored 32-11.

Keep an eye on

Phillies 3B **Scott Rolen** had a dismal June—hitting .260—but he has countered it with a potent July. Through last Saturday, Rolen was batting .330 in July with seven doubles, 13 RBIs and 18 runs scored and is flirting with a season average of .300.

High and inside

Through Saturday, Marlins All-Star RHP **Ryan Dempster** had lost three starts since the All-Star Game. Dempster has had trouble controlling his fastball, and he has fallen behind in counts.

TSN's Wired World

RHP **Felipe Lira**, who looked brutal when he was first called up from Class AAA, has been fairly steady since then—especially at home, where he is 2-0 with a 2.25 ERA. For more on the Expos, visit:

sportingnews.com/baseball/teams/expos

PROSPECT WATCH

The best outfield prospect in the Expos' organization arrived in the big leagues last week, in the five-tool person of CF **Milton Bradley**. Bradley has done absolutely nothing to prove he doesn't belong. He has made spectacular catches, displayed a strong throwing arm, blazed on the bases and shown a decent eye at the plate.

Atlanta

64-40: 1st

Cox running out of options in injury-plagued outfield



How desperate is the team for healthy outfielders after placing **Reggie Sanders** on the 15-day D.L.? It recalled **George Lombard** from

JULY'S GRADES	
OFFENSE	A
Minus Jordan and Galarraga for stretches, it still averages five runs a game.	
PITCHING	A
Leads the majors with a 4.16 ERA and has posted a 3.30 ERA since the All-Star break.	
DEFENSE	B
Sanders' injury has forced mediocre OF Bonilla into a starting role.	

Class AAA Richmond, and manager **Bobby Cox** immediately wrote his name in the lineup, inserting him in right field, where he hasn't played since spring training. Lombard, 24, was hitting .259 with 116 strikeouts in 97 games with Richmond, and his outfield skills are average, at best. He has a left fielder's arm, so by sending him to right, Cox

made it clear he is out of options with OFs **Brian Jordan** and **Trenidad Hubbard** also sidelined by injuries. Sanders needs at least two weeks to get healthy. ... 3B **Chipper Jones** has shouldered a large measure of the offense with Jordan and 1B **Andres Galarraga** nursing injuries. Jones was hitting .347 with six homers and 22 RBIs in his last 28 games entering this week. ... C **Javy Lopez** has run either ice-cold or red-hot at the plate this season. Right now, he's hot, having hit in 13 of his last 16 games at a .400 clip with seven homers and 15 RBIs. Lopez blames his inconsistent first half on trying too hard to make the All-Star team. He says the ups and downs have prepared him for his next slump.

SCOUTING REPORT: Each time a save situation comes up, LHP **John Rocker** is ready. But Cox has used RHPs **Kerry Ligtenberg** and **Scott Kamieniecki** as his closers lately. Rocker describes the situation as "extremely frustrating." He has appeared in five games since July 8, but he leads the staff with 14 saves. Cox has been reluctant to use Rocker because he has walked 35 in 30½ innings but only two in his last five innings. Pitching coach **Leo Mazzone** says Rocker still has to "earn it back, and he's working toward that."

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: OF **Bobby Bonilla** didn't sign on to be a regular, but with all the injuries, his name is in the lineup more times than not. He was more productive coming off the bench earlier in the season than he is now as a starter. He's hitting only .246 as a starter but is 5-for-14 with seven RBIs as a pinch hitter. —*Bill Zack*

BRAVES

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
C. Jones#	.318	99	358	70	114	24	78	.420	.595	7	39	66	15
A. Jones	.308	104	412	85	127	25	66	.383	.549	11	67	44	1
*Furcal#	.305	73	226	48	69	0	18	.403	.381	22	37	36	15
Lopez	.297	89	317	40	94	18	56	.343	.511	0	60	22	4
Galarraga	.294	92	330	50	97	21	67	.363	.533	3	81	23	7
Jordan	.274	85	314	48	86	13	55	.328	.449	5	48	23	1
Weiss#	.269	54	130	22	35	0	13	.380	.331	0	21	22	13
Bonilla#	.257	79	191	19	49	4	21	.370	.398	0	37	34	4
Bako+	.241	60	170	11	41	1	15	.330	.312	0	51	22	3
Lockhart+	.241	65	137	16	33	2	15	.307	.372	1	18	13	5
Joyner+	.235	74	149	14	35	4	20	.326	.376	0	26	21	2
Hubbard	.185	61	81	15	15	1	6	.290	.272	2	20	11	0
*Sisco	.111	16	18	4	2	1	2	.158	.278	0	4	1	0
*Lombard+	.000	2	8	1	0	0	0	.111	.000	0	1	0	0

GRAND SLAMS: Galarraga, Lopez (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
Remlinger+	3.19	2-2	45	48.0	31	17	17	5	51	22	8	.179
Maddux	3.36	12-5	23	163.1	157	69	61	15	123	32	0	.250
Glavine+	3.49	12-5	22	152.0	143	64	59	14	107	46	0	.250
Kamieniecki	3.52	1-1	7	7.2	5	6	3	1	7	7	1	.172
Ligtenberg	3.58	2-1	35	32.2	27	13	13	5	31	13	9	.225
Rocker+	4.45	1-0	35	30.1	24	15	15	3	46	35	14	.216
Burkett	4.73	8-4	21	83.2	103	50	44	7	77	30	0	.303
Ashby	4.78	7-7	19	124.1	128	77	66	17	71	45	0	.271
Millwood	5.10	6-8	23	134.0	146	79	76	18	105	47	0	.275
Mulholland+	5.73	9-9	24	124.0	168	86	79	21	59	26	1	.324
Belinda	7.07	1-3	46	35.2	39	32	28	10	40	17	1	.277

SHUTOUTS: Ashby, Glavine, Maddux (1)

COMPLETE GAMES: Maddux (4), Ashby, Glavine (2), Mulholland (1)

Florida

50-53: 3rd

Knee injuries knock legs out from under tottering offense



The lineup, already suffering from a lack of clutch hitting, will be without two key players for the next few weeks. LF **Cliff Floyd** will be out four

JULY'S GRADES	
OFFENSE	D
A drop in clutch hitting has led to the team's drop in the standings.	
PITCHING	D
Two starters have gone seven innings since the All-Star break. The bullpen is tired.	
DEFENSE	F
Tied team record with five errors in a game and entering week had made 21 in July.	

to six weeks after having surgery to remove torn cartilage from his knee. SS **Alex Gonzalez** will be out two to four weeks after spraining his knee and being put on the D.L. Of the two injuries, the loss of Floyd clearly is the biggest blow. He was on pace for 30 home runs and 30 stolen bases. Team officials believe the injury is related to a sprain Floyd suffered in the same knee June 11.

Mark Smith will take over in left field. Gonzalez's injury is discouraging because he was just starting to hit well consistently. He raised his average over .200 (to .201) a day earlier, hitting safely in 12 of 13 games. IFs **Chris Clapinski** and **Mendy Lopez** were called up from Class AAA to fill out the roster and will split time at short with **Dave Berg** and **Andy Fox**. Clapinski may have an edge for more time because he was reliable in the field and at the plate when he was with the club before.

SCOUTING REPORT: C **Ramon Castro** may not have returned from Class AAA Calgary a new man, but he came back with a new batting stance. Castro, a rookie, used to frustrate coaches because he has so much potential yet swung off-balance, often ahead of pitches. After spending spring training trying to pull too many pitches, Castro was demoted to Calgary, where hitting coach **Sal Rende** helped him open his stance. With the change, Castro batted .335 with 14 home runs and 45 RBIs at Calgary, prompting the team to call him up.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: The timing couldn't have been worse when the Braves claimed Marlins C **Paul Bako** off waivers. The Marlins started a series in Atlanta three days later, and that meant changing the signs they had used since opening day. Bako laughed when told what the Marlins had done, saying nobody had asked him to provide inside information. But LHP **Tom Glavine** did ask how to get C **Mike Redmond** out. Redmond started the series hitting .770 against Glavine. He singled once off Glavine and scored a run. —*Joe Capozzi*

MARLINS

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Castillo#	.364	82	327	71	119	1	7	.451	.428	42	51	52	8
Clapinski#	.314	16	35	4	11	0	4	.333	.457	0	6	1	2
*Castro	.304	7	23	3	7	0	3	.346	.304	0	5	2	0
Kotsay+	.297	98	350	50	104	7	39	.340	.446	14	30	24	2
Lee	.283	101	276	44	78	20	43	.380	.547	0	72	42	6
Berg	.276	51	134	17	37	0	12	.380	.373	3	23	19	4
Redmond	.273	53	143	13	39	0	7	.340	.329	0	17	8	1
Lowell	.266	84	312	49	83	15	54	.334	.478	0	43	32	9
Millar	.265	82	185	26	49	10	29	.377	.486	0	29	28	5
M. Smith	.250	58	104	14	26	4	20	.342	.413	2	24	14	0
Wilson	.249	103	393	62	98	21	82	.327	.486	22	130	43	3
Fox+	.189	56	143	14	27	2	13	.232	.259	3	32	8	7
Lopez	.000	1	1	0	0	0	0	.000	.000	0	0	0	0

GRAND SLAMS: Kotsay, Lee, Lowell, Wilson (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
Almanza+	2.14	2-0	44	33.2	18	9	8	1	34	31	0	.162
Bones	3.02	2-2	36	56.2	61	23	19	4	41	21	0	.276
Miceli	3.04	4-2	25	26.2	19	9	9	2	27	14	0	.196
Looper	3.14	3-1	49	48.2	48	25	17	2	20	22	1	.253
*C. Smith	3.66	1-3	8	46.2	50	23	19	2	37	24	0	.282
Dempster	4.05	9-8	21	142.1	132	71	64	21	129	64	0	.245
Alfonseca	4.18	3-4	45	47.1	59	24	22	6	37	13	30	.299
Cornelius	4.29	3-5	12	71.1	70	38	34	9	24	29	0	.263
Darensbourg+	4.60	4-1	39	45.0	46	26	23	6	42	19	0	.267
Aybar	4.98	1-2	35	56.0	58	35	31	8	33	25	0	.265
Sanchez+	4.99	6-8	21	126.1	134	77	70	23	85	58	0	.276
*Burnett	5.73	1-1	2	11.0	9	7	7	2	8	8	0	.225

SHUTOUTS: Dempster, Sanchez (1)

COMPLETE GAMES: Dempster (2), Sanchez (1)

Montreal

47-53: 4th

Trade for Irbu was a waste; pitcher goes back to D.L.



The acquisition of RHP Hideki Irbu must be declared a bust. Irbu missed two months after surgery on a right knee that had tears far more

severe than the club would admit. Irbu said last week that the knee had been bothering him for three years, and he had not wanted to say anything about it. Irbu's comeback attempt was short-lived. He pitched only one game, then woke up one morning, and his elbow was locked. He was placed on the 15-day disabled list, with X-rays pending. LHP Trey Moore returned to

Montreal from Class AAA Ottawa to take Irbu's place. Moore has pitched well in Ottawa. ... Rookie RHP T.J. Tucker underwent diagnostic arthroscopic surgery last Wednesday in Birmingham, Ala. The surgery revealed some scar tissue but nothing loose in his elbow. Tucker can begin throwing in four weeks. He is another casualty of players being called up too early because of the raft of injuries to the club's pitching staff.

SCOUTING REPORT: The team is mishandling one of its best pitching prospects. With the injury to Irbu, the club recalled RHP Guillermo Mota from Class AAA. It was the fourth time Mota has been recalled this season. He was demoted when Irbu was activated, and he was likely to be sent back down when Moore was activated to take Irbu's spot in the rotation. All of which is not helping the development of Mota, who was supposed to be a closer in-the-making. Mota throws 98 mph and had great control at Class AA. Now Mota is pitching with a lack of confidence whenever he gets on the mound in the big leagues.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: Michael Barrett has been catching the pitchers in the bullpen, trying to get his leg strength back so he can catch in games. But he is having a more difficult time than he did in his rookie season when he split time between catching and third. This year, he's having trouble dealing with the two different sets of muscles used at the two positions. That he has lost a lot of confidence as a hitter won't help him whenever he starts. —Stephanie Myles

EXPOS

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Sequignol#	.385	26	52	6	20	4	9	.418	.654	0	9	3	3
V. Guerrero	.349	96	355	61	124	25	83	.421	.665	7	46	40	8
Vidro#	.348	96	388	69	135	15	68	.391	.559	5	50	29	5
*de la Rosa	.333	9	24	4	8	2	4	.360	.583	1	4	1	2
Blum#	.297	69	145	23	43	5	23	.364	.469	0	29	15	3
*Bradley#	.279	10	43	8	12	0	3	.354	.349	1	10	5	1
Mordecai	.272	62	125	15	34	4	13	.321	.448	2	27	8	4
Stevens+	.260	90	323	46	84	18	57	.346	.489	0	76	41	9
W. Guerrero#	.260	77	154	15	40	1	13	.307	.299	4	17	11	2
Bergeron+	.242	93	335	59	81	3	19	.315	.334	8	60	36	3
Widger	.232	78	250	27	58	12	34	.313	.452	1	57	29	6
*Tracy+	.214	33	70	10	15	3	14	.317	.343	0	22	10	3
Barrett	.211	58	185	19	39	1	14	.269	.292	0	19	14	13
Webster	.177	27	62	5	11	0	2	.215	.210	0	10	3	0

GRAND SLAMS: Tracy (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
Kline+	2.61	1-3	56	58.2	54	18	17	5	49	19	12	.249
*Strickland	3.70	2-1	26	24.1	25	12	10	2	25	6	2	.253
Vazquez	4.05	8-5	21	135.2	159	65	61	16	106	38	0	.292
Santana	4.23	0-2	12	27.2	24	14	13	6	30	17	0	.231
Telford	4.50	5-4	45	56.0	58	33	28	7	40	20	1	.274
Lira	4.61	2-1	35	56.2	67	34	29	6	29	19	0	.286
Hermanson	5.08	8-8	25	111.2	126	72	63	16	56	45	4	.288
Johnson	5.76	5-5	22	65.2	69	43	42	10	44	31	0	.266
Thurman	6.30	2-1	5	20.0	26	15	14	1	11	11	0	.310
*Forster+	6.75	0-0	15	9.1	10	10	7	1	6	7	0	.250
Mota	10.67	0-1	16	14.1	17	17	17	3	9	8	0	.293

SHUTOUTS: Hermanson (1)

COMPLETE GAMES: Hermanson, Vazquez (1)

New York

58-44: 2nd

Bordick trade gives boost to infield, team confidence



In acquiring SS Mike Bordick from the Orioles and RHP Rick White and OF Bubba Trammell from the Devil Rays, G.M. Steve Phillips finally

provided the club with the necessary moves to compete down the stretch. Almost from the time Bordick was obtained, the mood in the clubhouse changed. Unlike SS Melvin Mora, who was dealt to Baltimore in the deal, Bordick won't be bothered by comparisons with injured SS Rey Ordenez. Mora was liked in the clubhouse and was a hard worker who contributed

several clutch hits, but his defensive shortcomings became more apparent on a daily basis. White's acquisition gives the Mets another righthanded workhorse to complement Turk Wendell and lefties Dennis Cook and John Franco in the bullpen. ... The team got another lift last week when 3B Robin Ventura came off the 15-day D.L. and join Bordick, 2B Edgardo Alfonzo and 1B Todd Zeile in the infield, giving the team a credible unit again.

SCOUTING REPORT: It would be ridiculous to expect Bordick to match Ordenez's defensive flair, but Bordick is an above-average defender with good range. At the plate, he can hit for power and average. Bordick, a righthanded hitter, hit 16 home runs with Baltimore this season and added another one in his first at-bat with the Mets. Later in his Mets debut, he added an opposite-field hit and-run single through the hole that set up the winning run.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: It didn't take long for the Mets, to see the benefits of having an All-Star shortstop take over for Mora. It will take the infield awhile to adjust to a new shortstop and for Bordick to learn manager Bobby Valentine's defensive stunts, but his presence makes the entire infield better. As Ordenez had done while winning three Gold Gloves, Bordick allows the other infielders to cheat a little. Even without Ordenez's tremendous range, Bordick lets Ventura play closer to the third base line and enables Alfonzo to shift a few feet farther from second base. —Jesus Ortiz

METS

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Bordick	.667	1	3	1	2	1	1	.750	.667	0	0	1	0
Piazza	.350	89	320	65	112	29	85	.419	.688	3	41	38	2
Alfonzo	.314	96	353	70	111	13	60	.416	.516	3	46	64	7
Agbayani	.307	74	202	31	62	7	35	.392	.470	4	42	27	2
Zeile	.298	99	359	48	107	15	59	.375	.518	2	56	44	8
Bell	.297	99	387	70	115	14	58	.374	.465	6	87	46	2
*Payton	.287	92	286	34	82	9	35	.331	.441	3	34	21	1
Pratt	.252	49	103	21	26	7	19	.345	.485	0	21	10	0
Harris+	.235	69	149	21	35	3	19	.287	.369	10	12	12	9
Ventura+	.235	86	294	42	69	16	53	.350	.463	2	52	52	10
McEwing	.232	50	112	15	26	14	25	.259	.411	3	21	3	3
M. Franco+	.232	75	95	5	22	0	7	.324	.263	0	12	13	3
Abbott	.206	50	107	16	22	3	7	.295	.364	1	35	13	4
Trammell	.000	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	.000	0	0	0	0

GRAND SLAMS: Piazza (3), Agbayani, Pratt, Ventura, Zeile (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
White	0.00	1-0	1	1.0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	.000
Benitez	2.81	2-4	51	51.1	26	18	16	7	68	29	25	.148
J. Franco+	3.10	5-3	44	40.2	32	16	14	3	38	16	3	.216
Leiter+	3.30	11-4	20	139.0	120	57	51	15	133	49	0	.233
Hampton+	3.51	10-7	22	143.2	136	66	56	9	97	72	0	.252
Wendell	3.51	4-4	53	56.1	41	24	22	7	47	31	0	.209
Mahomes	3.82	4-1	35	63.2	59	32	27	7	51	45	0	.246
Rusch+	4.03	7-7	19	120.2	121	54	54	13	93	24	0	.262
Reed	4.56	5-2	18	108.2	118	58	55	19	65	22	0	.276
Cook+	5.09	5-2	47	40.2	46	23	23	5	38	17	1	.288
B.J. Jones	6.19	4-5	15	77.0	93	54	53	12	48	29	0	.297

SHUTOUTS: Hampton (1)

COMPLETE GAMES: Hampton (3), Rusch (2), Leiter (1)

Philadelphia

45-57: 5th

Club takes trading places seriously in busy week



The trade that brought RHP Kent Bottenfield from the Angels to the Phillies—in exchange for OF Ron Gant—was a swift-moving deal.

Phillies G.M. Ed Wade spoke to Angels G.M. Bill Stoneman last Friday about another player when Bottenfield's name came up. Though Wade was inclined to pass at first, the name intrigued him. Bottenfield will provide the club's young rotation with a durable, veteran arm. His arrival figures to push RHP Cliff Politte out of the rotation for now. Bottenfield will

make his first start (100th career) Friday against the Rockies. He is the 11th starting pitcher and 25th pitcher used by the club in 2000. He spent part of June on the D.L. because of shoulder tendinitis, but the club is convinced he is healthy. ... The club lost two starting pitchers within three days when RHP Curt Schilling was traded to Arizona for 1B/OF Travis Lee, LHP Omar Daal, RHP Vicente Padilla and RHP Nelson Figueroa. And RHP Paul Byrd was diagnosed with a season-ending tear in his throwing shoulder. Byrd was allowed to pitch in relief on back-to-back days and reported the injury after his second outing.

SCOUTING REPORT: Padilla, 22, was one of the keys to the Schilling deal. He throws a 95- to 96-mph fastball, a sinker and a slider/curve. He was protected in Arizona by closers Matt Mantei and Byung-Hyun Kim. He will fill a greater role of responsibility with the Phillies. He must sharpen his control and work on holding baserunners more effectively, but the raw package is something the team has been seeking in a reliever.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: With LHPs Daal and Bruce Chen and RHP Robert Person on pitch counts for the next several starts (Daal and Chen because they were relievers with Arizona and Atlanta), the team will have to continue to place a premium on bullpen performance. With Schilling gone, who is the staff ace? Though there's no proven commodity, C Mike Lieberthal picks Person. Person is the rotation's senior pitcher (30) and has a 2.94 ERA. —Chris Edwards

PHILLIES

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Abreu+	.311	99	370	65	115	15	53	.406	.538	13	70	59	1
Bennett	.300	9	20	1	6	1	2	.391	.550	0	2	2	0
Rolen	.289	84	315	58	91	17	58	.360	.524	5	59	32	7
Glanville	.260	99	412	54	107	6	31	.295	.347	20	52	20	2
Sefcik	.258	62	97	9	25	0	5	.324	.330	4	10	10	0
Gant	.254	89	343	54	87	20	38	.324	.487	5	78	27	6
*Burrell	.250	55	208	30	52	9	42	.336	.462	0	78	27	6
Brogna+	.248	36	125	12	31	1	13	.291	.384	1	27	6	1
Morandini+	.246	86	284	30	70	0	21	.324	.313	5	53	29	5
Jordan	.244	68	217	21	53	2	20	.277	.346	0	25	11	5
Prince	.234	26	64	7	15	2	10	.290	.375	0	15	4	1
Lee+	.230	73	226	34	52	8	40	.306	.394	5	46	25	4
Hunter	.229	50	83	10	19	6	17	.297	.482	0	19	8	0
Relaford#	.221	80	244	29	54	3	29	.365	.332	5	45	46	23
Arias	.189	49	111	12	21	2	11	.258	.315	1	21	9	3

GRAND SLAMS: Abreu, Burrell, Hunter, Rolen (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
Vosberg+	2.45	0-0	10	7.1	6	2	2	1	7	6	0	.222
Chen+	2.73	5-0	25	52.2	49	20	16	6	50	23	0	.240
*Padilla	2.79	2-2	29	38.2	38	13	12	0	33	12	0	.259
Person	2.94	5-3	16	101.0	79	34	33	7	101	52	0	.218
Wolf+	3.69	8-5	20	134.0	124	58	55	16	109	46	0	.247
*Politte	3.72	2-2	5	29.0	26	12	12	5	25	13	0	.239
Brock	4.13	5-5	38	69.2	62	35	32	14	45	28	1	.235
Holzemer+	5.60	0-1	19	17.2	23	11	11	1	15	3	0	.319
Brantley	5.74	1-4	30	31.1	31	20	20	7	31	19	16	.256
Daal+	7.04	2-11	21	101.0	133	90	79	17	52	45	0	.314

SHUTOUTS: Person, Schilling (1)

COMPLETE GAMES: Schilling (4), Ashby, Person, Wolf (1)

INSIDE THE N.L. CENTRAL



Giles

SCOTT ROVAK FOR TSN

Who's HOT

Reds 1B **Sean Casey** started the season on the D.L. and then hit only .213 in his first 127 at-bats. But his .404 average since the break signals that he's back on the path to stardom. He entered the week on a 20-game hitting streak.

Who's NOT

Pirates All-Star OF **Brian Giles** has been anything but hot since the break—.189 in his first 53 at-bats. For the year, he was hitting .308 with 85 RBIs through last Saturday, but his slugging percentage plummeted from .611 in the first half to .448 in the second.

CIRCLE THE CALENDAR

Houston's season ends October 1. Youngsters **Richard Hidalgo**, **Lance Berkman** and **Mitch Meluskey** have given the team hope for the future, but nothing else has gone right. But with a fresh start next year—and a few new arms—the team could return to contention in the Central Division.

Keep an eye on

Cardinals RHP **Alan Benes**, who has a 14.04 ERA since posting a 3.38 ERA in June. Benes, who used to be one of the majors' top young pitchers, probably hasn't fully recovered from his two shoulder surgeries (1997 and '98).

High and inside

The Brewers pulled a fast one on the Indians last week by acquiring OF/1B **Richie Sexson** for RHPs **Bob Wickman**, **Steve Woodard** and **Jason Bere**. Sexson eventually should anchor Milwaukee's lineup.

TSN's Wired World

Pirates 3B **Aramis Ramirez**, 22, has been solid since his return to the majors. He has done a decent job defensively and has done a better job of driving the ball. For more on the Pirates, visit:

sportingnews.com/baseball/teams/pirates

PROSPECT WATCH

Closer **Jack Krawczyk** has been impeccable for the Brewers' Class A Mudville team. In his first 38 appearances, he was 5-0 with 14 saves and a 1.25 ERA. Krawczyk, 24, has allowed only 43 hits and seven walks in 64½ innings. Though not a power pitcher, he has recorded 60 strikeouts.

Chicago

47-55: 3rd

Valdes' departure leaves trio of young starters in rotation



With the trade of RHP **Ismael Valdes** to the Dodgers for a pair of minor leaguers, the team now is going with a primarily young staff. After rotation

JULY'S GRADES

OFFENSE	C
Sosa is getting hot, but the team still needs to put together big innings more consistently.	
PITCHING	B
Lieber and Tapani are threats to go deep every game. Quevedo gets early chance.	
DEFENSE	A
Girardi is a general behind the plate. Buford is catching everything in center.	

graybeards **Kevin Tapani**, 36, and **Jon Lieber**, 30, manager **Don Baylor** goes with RHP **Kerry Wood**, 23, LHP **Scott Downs**, 24, and RHP **Ruben Quevedo**, 21. Tapani and Lieber lend stability to a rotation that routinely has been going seven or eight innings and taking the pressure off an improving bullpen. Wood is still working his way back from last year's major elbow surgery, but he has been surging. Downs has learned on the job. Quevedo struggled during three earlier stints with the Cubs this year, but he was miscast as a reliever. With Quevedo now taking a regular turn, the team is confident he'll become the pitcher the team hoped he would be. ... Baylor may settle on **Willie Greene** as his everyday third baseman. Greene has been sharing duties with **Jose Nieves**, but Nieves suffered through an 0-for-21 slump last week and Baylor feared he was taking his hitting woes to the field. Greene has struggled against lefthanded pitchers, but his defense this year has been better than expected.

SCOUTING REPORT: RHP **Tim Worrell**, 33, has been a major factor in the improvement of the bullpen since late May. Worrell hasn't thrown as hard since having major surgery on his elbow in 1994, but he knows how to pitch. He has a good slider, which he keeps away from righthanded batters and runs in on lefties. If the Cubs re-sign him for next year and don't add an established closer, Worrell could compete for the job.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: The Cubs took a chance on Downs this year after he tore up the minors last year. Baylor wanted a lefty in the rotation, so he decided to let Downs take the occasional lump while learning on the job. Downs has helped himself by staying on the bench on days he doesn't pitch and has grown more aggressive and confident on the mound as the season has gone on. He will study opposing hitters, and he isn't afraid to seek Tapani's advice. —Bruce Miles

CUBS

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Sosa	.319	102	395	72	126	31	92	.409	.615	6	110	63	6
Meyers	.313	11	16	3	5	0	1	.313	.438	1	4	0	2
E. Young	.297	100	401	69	119	6	34	.379	.421	32	25	47	11
Girardi	.294	72	252	39	74	5	27	.365	.409	1	39	27	5
Grace+	.291	84	309	51	90	9	51	.399	.453	1	18	55	3
Gutierrez	.279	73	283	42	79	7	39	.365	.399	4	31	37	6
Buford	.269	97	338	46	91	14	36	.341	.444	2	81	31	2
Rodriguez+	.251	76	259	37	65	18	51	.314	.525	1	76	22	2
Greene+	.234	64	197	26	46	7	24	.332	.411	2	49	28	5
Reed+	.229	55	131	16	30	3	17	.358	.366	0	36	26	2
Nieves	.206	57	141	13	29	4	17	.245	.376	0	26	8	3
Huson+	.197	39	61	12	12	0	5	.290	.279	1	7	8	1
B. Brown+	.190	73	142	11	27	5	14	.238	.345	1	55	8	2
*Matthews Jr.#	.182	26	33	6	6	1	2	.250	.273	0	5	2	0

GRAND SLAMS: Grace, Rodriguez, Sosa (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Av.
Worrell	1.95	1-2	26	32.1	23	7	7	3	32	10	1	1.97
Rain	2.59	2-0	14	24.1	18	7	7	4	28	6	0	2.07
Van Poppel	2.89	2-3	31	43.2	37	16	14	4	43	26	2	2.37
Lieber	3.63	9-5	22	163.2	151	72	66	18	118	36	0	2.43
Tapani	4.76	6-8	22	147.1	151	82	78	30	118	34	0	2.64
Heredia+	5.00	6-3	50	36.0	27	20	20	3	34	21	1	2.13
Wood	5.16	6-6	15	90.2	76	55	52	10	80	58	0	2.32
*Downs+	5.17	4-3	18	94.0	117	59	54	13	63	37	0	3.10
Aguilera	5.89	1-2	43	36.2	39	26	24	11	29	16	23	2.65
Farnsworth	8.31	1-5	23	47.2	66	44	44	12	39	31	1	3.30
*Quevedo	8.87	0-3	9	23.1	29	25	23	5	16	17	0	2.96

SHUTOUTS: Lieber (1)

COMPLETE GAMES: Lieber (4), Tapani (2)

Cincinnati

52-51: 2nd

Bell appears back on track after returning from minors



RHP **Rob Bell** thinks he got everything he needed out of his one-month stint in the minors, including a healthy appreciation for the major leagues. Bell, the rookie curveball artist who fell on hard times after making an eye-catching debut with the Reds, was called up last week after going 4-0 in six starts with Class AAA Louisville. He was inserted into one of the spots in what primarily will be a four-man rotation over the next month or so. The Reds created a roster spot for Bell, 23, by trading RHP **Manny Aybar** to

JULY'S GRADES

OFFENSE	B
The team slightly improved its batting average and runs per game in July.	
PITCHING	C
Just when the unsettled rotation was improving, the bullpen started to falter.	
DEFENSE	C
The team's average of 17 errors per month remained virtually unchanged in July.	

Florida for Class A RHP **Jorge Cordova**. Bell was 4-6 with a 5.28 ERA when he was optioned June 25, and he agreed he needed to refocus and regroup and get back to pitching aggressively. ... SS **Barry Larkin** reached base safely in 76 of his first 82 games.

SCOUTING REPORT: RHP **Elmer Dessens** (6-0, 187) isn't physically imposing, but his results have him casting a large shadow on opposing hitters. Dessens, who was signed as a free agent by the Reds on December 13 and opened the season with Class AAA Louisville, has become the Reds' stopper as a starter. Four of his first five wins—the first against St. Louis in relief—came after Cincinnati losses. Dessens, 28, doesn't have overpowering stuff, but he complements an average fastball with a slider and changeup that help set up his out pitch—a sinker. According to pitching coach **Don Gullett**, the key to Dessens' success is getting ahead of hitters and making them hit his pitch. Dessens replaced the traded LHP **Denny Neagle** in the rotation.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: Batting practice sometimes can be thought of as a time for fooling around, but OF **Dante Bichette** is serious when he starts swinging at pitches one-handed. He periodically will take several turns in the cage using just his back (right) hand and swinging the bat like a tennis player making a forehand shot. Bichette says he started doing it while trying to figure out exactly where his power comes from. He continued as a way of helping coordinate the back side of his body with his swing. —Mark Schmetzer

REDS

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Stynes	.390	64	164	38	64	7	20	.442	.591	1	26	15	4
*M. Bell	.333	3	6	0	2	0	0	.333	.333	0	1	0	0
B. Larkin	.324	82	321	56	104	10	35	.399	.511	13	24	40	11
Young#	.294	96	361	39	106	11	54	.332	.465	0	53	20	2
Ochoa	.291	61	103	21	30	4	22	.368	.476	4	10	12	0
Bichette	.285	97	361	52	103	15	54	.343	.463	5	50	30	6
Casey+	.285	81	295	37	84	8	37	.369	.434	0	52	35	5
Tucker+	.270	91	152	32	41	11	26	.381	.553	4	35	24	2
Castro	.266	44	94	10	25	1	12	.307	.426	0	14	6	0
Reese	.265	94	358	53	95	8	36	.326	.405	19	60	30	10
Taubensee+	.257	29	121	29	67	6	22	.316	.364	0	43	21	5
Griffey Jr.+	.244	103	365	75	89	32	90	.382	.556	6	85	79	4
Santiago	.234	52	145	9	34	3	19	.282	.352	0	20	9	1
Kieschnick+	.000	5	4	0	0	0	0	.000	.000	0	2	0	0

GRAND SLAMS: Griffey Jr. (2), Bichette (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Av.
Wohlers	0.00	0-0	4	8.0	3	0	0	0	4	2	0	1.11
Graves	2.22	10-2	43	65.0	56	20	16	4	38	32	17	2.39
Williamson	3.49	3-7	42	77.1	61	32	30	4	105	56	6	2.16
Sullivan	3.93	1-4	51	66.1	62	31	29	7	63	25	2	2.54
Luebbers	4.05	0-1	1	6.2	7	3	3	0	1	3	0	2.80
Dessens	4.76	5-0	29	75.2	91	41	40	6	44	23	1	3.05
*R. Bell	5.28	4-6	19	75.0	71	47	44	17	59	42	0	2.45
Harnisch	5.29	3-5	12	68.0	70	45	40	14	34	32	0	2.59
Parris	5.46	5-13	21	117.0	135	77	71	24	72	41	0	2.88
Reyes+	5.85	2-1	43	32.1	36	30	21	5	28	24	0	2.86
Villone+	6.10	8-7	21	97.1	121	74	66	19	47	57	0	3.14

SHUTOUTS: Harnisch (1)

COMPLETE GAMES: Harnisch (2)

Houston

38-65: 6th

Reynolds' control problems may be result of ailing back



RHP **Shane Reynolds** headed back to Houston last week to have his ailing back examined. Since starting the season 5-0, Reynolds has gone 2-8.

Once a pitcher with pinpoint control—he had a startling 4-1 career strikeouts-to-walks ratio going into the year—he is struggling to maintain a 2-to-1 ratio this season. Reynolds already is approaching his career highs in hit batsmen and home runs allowed. Also, his 5.22 ERA entering the week is more than 1½ runs a game higher than his previous career

average of 3.70. The stats partially can be blamed on the new stadium. But manager **Larry Dierker** thought Reynolds was pitching too carefully recently, and the team is wondering if his back ailment was bothering him more than he admitted. If Reynolds is placed on the D.L., the team was expected to call up RHP **Brian Powell** (9-4 at Class AAA New Orleans). Team officials have wanted to call up Powell anyway but haven't been able to find a spot for him.

SCOUTING REPORT: RHP **Jose Lima** has improved greatly in his past four starts entering the week, going 2-0 with two no-decisions. When he's going good, Lima sets up hitters with an 88- to 90-mph sinking fastball and then finishes them with a mesmerizing changeup that has the same arm action and release but is 8- to 10-mph slower. When Lima lets his emotions get the best of him, his fastball velocity increases a mile or two an hour, but it stays up and hitters pound it.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: In the past month, the Astros periodically have gone through some extra workouts on fundamentals to help shake them from the doldrums of a first half in which they lost more games (53) than any other squad in club history. Dierker says the extra workouts, held in special sessions before regular game preparations, aren't meant as punishment. The team has worked on fly balls, throwing to certain bases, pitchers' bunting and extra infield practice at various times in recent weeks. Dierker doesn't want to send a signal that poor play is acceptable. —*Jim Carley*

ASTROS

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Alou	.350	72	254	40	89	16	55	.412	.602	2	26	29	5
Spier+	.314	82	236	30	74	3	29	.396	.424	5	26	31	4
Berkman#	.300	65	220	44	66	15	43	.377	.582	3	49	29	5
*Meluskey#	.298	83	242	36	72	11	50	.392	.504	1	54	36	7
Bagwell	.295	102	380	90	112	28	74	.413	.579	5	80	71	6
Hidalgo	.287	95	341	64	98	29	75	.380	.613	7	79	39	5
*Lugo	.273	58	172	22	47	2	15	.330	.372	9	41	15	10
Biggio	.270	98	367	65	99	7	32	.391	.390	12	71	60	6
*Truby	.258	30	89	6	23	1	9	.283	.371	0	21	2	4
Ward+	.239	79	197	26	47	14	35	.280	.492	0	45	12	1
Eusebio	.234	54	145	14	34	5	16	.327	.393	0	34	18	2
Barker#	.200	41	140	10	8	1	3	.289	.300	4	15	4	0
Mieske	.159	52	69	5	11	0	4	.237	.232	0	15	6	0
Bogar	.128	64	148	10	19	2	11	.222	.209	0	31	17	8

GRAND SLAMS: Bagwell, Caminiti, Hidalgo, Spiers (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
Valdes	2.97	2-2	28	30	37	18	10	0	20	15	2	.294
Slusarski	4.18	1-5	31	47.1	44	22	22	5	30	14	1	.249
Henry	4.59	1-3	44	51.0	38	26	26	10	44	28	1	.207
*Franklin+	4.91	0-0	2	3.2	6	2	2	0	3	3	0	.353
Holt	5.10	4-11	22	136.0	158	80	77	15	95	51	0	.303
Elarton	5.21	10-4	18	103.2	117	73	60	17	67	48	0	.279
Reynolds	5.22	7-8	22	131.0	150	86	76	20	93	45	0	.287
Dotel	5.27	2-5	25	100.2	104	63	59	20	106	46	2	.269
*Miller	6.92	1-3	4	26.0	26	20	20	4	26	11	0	.263
Lima	6.98	3-13	21	125.0	167	103	97	32	87	41	0	.321
*Green	11.57	0-0	3	4.2	4	8	6	1	6	9	0	.222

SHUTOUTS: Holt (1)
COMPLETE GAMES: Holt (2)

Milwaukee

43-61: 5th

Lineup protection Sexson provides should lift scoring



1B/OF **Richie Sexson** should have an immediate impact on the sputtering offense. He will bat cleanup between **Geoff Jenkins** and **Jeromy Burnitz** and

should help produce more runs by providing adequate protection in the middle of the lineup.

Though he has struggled at the plate much of the season, the club needed a righthanded power hitter who could play first. Sexson's high strikeout totals don't concern manager **Davey Lopes**. The team liked Sexson so much that it traded three quality pitchers for him in

starting RHPs **Jason Bere** and **Steve Woodard** and closer **Bob Wickman**. Along with Sexson, the Brewers received from the Indians RHPs **Paul Rigdon** and **Kane Davis**. Rigdon took Bere's spot in the rotation Saturday and will get plenty of opportunities. ... Wickman became expendable because the club couldn't get him the ball enough. RHP **Curtis Leskanic** is the new closer. He throws hard and has the right makeup to pitch in tough spots. Other than Wickman, Leskanic has been the club's most consistent reliever, but he has allowed too many walks.

SCOUTING REPORT: The loss of Bere and Woodard means RHP **Jamey Wright** has to meet expectations. He has been almost untouchable in some games, too wild in others. He has an outstanding arm—all of his pitches move. When he's on, he has one of the league's best sinkers. But his mechanics on the mound get him into trouble. He has a tendency to lose his arm slot during games. And his ball moves so much that he is prone to walks. He usually has a bad inning a game because he puts too many runners on base.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: Because RHP **Jeff D'Amico** has had multiple shoulder surgeries, his fastball isn't overpowering. Still, he had a 1.77 ERA in 76⅓ innings entering the week. The key has been the command of his slow curve—hitters haven't been able to do much with his best pitch, because it has a rare "12 to 6" drop. His ability to throw it for a strike made him a dominant pitcher in July. —*Emmett Prosser*

BREWERS

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Jenkins+	.296	79	294	50	87	16	54	.344	.551	6	78	16	5
Belliard	.273	104	403	57	110	6	41	.359	.407	5	56	55	11
Hayes	.272	91	283	42	77	8	39	.374	.417	1	62	48	6
Casanova#	.264	45	121	11	32	4	18	.336	.405	1	25	10	3
Lopez#	.263	46	114	11	30	2	12	.325	.404	1	25	7	5
Houston+	.251	56	175	22	44	12	24	.303	.509	0	45	13	7
Hernandez	.241	95	353	41	85	11	51	.311	.394	2	99	31	18
Grisson	.240	102	416	43	100	10	49	.277	.353	14	71	22	2
Echevarria	.240	18	25	1	6	1	4	.269	.400	0	6	1	0
J. Mouton	.231	58	104	14	24	1	9	.352	.317	7	29	19	1
Blanco	.227	67	203	22	46	5	21	.318	.379	0	41	28	3
Burnitz+	.218	105	372	65	81	22	61	.339	.449	5	75	61	4
Sexson	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	0	0	0	0

GRAND SLAMS: Hernandez (2), Blanco, Casanova (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
D'Amico	1.77	6-4	11	76.1	58	21	15	6	40	26	0	.214
*King+	2.70	0-0	11	6.2	6	2	2	1	3	0	0	.240
Leskanic	3.04	2-2	45	47.1	37	16	16	6	42	32	1	.222
Weathers	3.30	3-3	50	57.1	57	23	21	6	42	18	1	.269
Wright	3.52	6-4	14	87.0	75	37	34	6	57	55	0	.244
Acevedo	4.09	0-3	35	50.2	48	26	23	4	35	21	0	.249
Haynes	4.96	9-10	21	130.2	142	78	72	17	50	62	0	.285
Snyder	5.21	3-5	13	74.1	78	48	43	3	42	49	0	.274
De Los Santos+	6.08	1-3	42	50.1	52	34	34	12	47	27	0	.263
*Rigdon	7.20	0-1	1	5.0	7	4	4	1	3	2	0	.318
Scanlan	45.00	0-0	1	1.0	6	6	5	0	1	0	0	.750
*Davis	-	0-0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-

SHUTOUTS: D'Amico (1)
COMPLETE GAMES: D'Amico, Woodard (1)

Pittsburgh

45-57: 4th

New faces can only improve this team's defensive ability



The reshaping for 2001 is under way with the acquisition of OF **Alex Ramirez** and IF **Enrique Wilson** from the Indians and SS **Jack Wilson** from

the Cardinals. Enrique Wilson soon will be back from a minor league rehab assignment. Ramirez already is getting a look in right and has a chance to win one of the corner spots: Left field was vacated when **Wil Cordero** was dealt to Cleveland, and right field has been unsettled since opening day when starter **Chad Hermansen** went back to the minors. Ideally, the

team will find a center fielder and move **Brian Giles** back to left, where he's best suited. The team has an abundance of outfielders, but only Giles has claimed a full-time position. Jack Wilson is starting out at Class AA Altoona. ... With LHP **Jason Christiansen** off to St. Louis, the team can cover his spot in the bullpen with **Scott Sauerbeck** as the top lefthanded setup man. It was time for a change for Christiansen, who had grown increasingly frustrated with the Pirates. In fact, his last act was a blowup at manager **Gene Lamont** after he was removed from Sunday's game.

SCOUTING REPORT: Ramirez is an interesting talent for the outfield mix. He runs well, has a reputation for being good defensively and will have the strongest throwing arm in the outfield. Ramirez had a 34-home run season in the minors. He'll fit in with the Pirates because he appears to be an aggressive hitter who has plenty of strikeouts without a lot of walks.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: Prospects are few in the top levels of the minor leagues as the organization pays the price for poor drafts in 1997 and '98. That's created a talent gap, as has a limited budget for scouting and signing. The team has had drafts in which it has passed on better players to take someone they knew would sign for the price the club would offer. The best example is 1998 No. 1 pick **Clint Johnston**, who was chosen largely because the club knew it could sign him. The team thinks it will catch up with good drafts in 1999 and this year. —*John Mehno*

PIRATES

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Kendall	.323	96	362	74	117	9	35	.427	.470	16	52	58	7
Giles+	.308	102	377	68	116	23	85	.414	.586	6	47	67	4
Osik	.306	16	36	3	11	2	5	.390	.556	0	1	4	1
Vander Wal+	.281	82	228	42	64	14	53	.387	.544	8	57	39	5
Benjamin	.279	68	179	22	50	2	14	.316	.419	3	33	8	2
Sojo	.271	57	170	13	46	5	20	.317	.418	0	16	11	5
Aven	.259	66	139	17	36	4	24	.285	.424	2	29	5	1
Young	.258	95	364	57	94	16	64	.311	.451	6	75	24	14
Morris+	.251	89	342	48	86	3	22	.333	.336	5	46	41	11
E. Brown	.238	10	21	3	5	2	7	.320	.571	1	5	3	0
Meares	.237	86	317	33	75	8	35	.285	.369	1	69	17	14
Ar. Ramirez	.235	51	179	15	42	5	23	.274	.385	0	27	7	9
Al. Ramirez	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	0	0	0	0

GRAND SLAMS: Vander Wal (2), Meares, Ar. Ramirez (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
*Sparks	0.00	0-0	2	2.1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	.143
Manzanillo	3.30	1-1	20	30.0	24	12	11	5	20	16	0	.222
Williams	3.38	2-2	43	42.2	36	19	16	5	44	20	15	.237
Benson	3.39	8-8	21	148.2	132	63	56	15	130	50	0	.237
Silva	3.48	7-4	40	85.1	95	42	33	9	70	28	0	.280
Peters+	3.52	0-1	14	23.0	22	9	9	2	14	9	1	.250
Sauerbeck+	3.65	3-1	46	49.1	49	22	20	1	52	45	0	.272
Christiansen+	4.06	2-8	43	37.2	25	18	17	2	41	24	1	.191
Cordova	4.52	6-7	16	89.2	93	53	45	11	61	33	0	.269
Anderson+	4.64	3-5	16	85.1	92	49	44	5	45	36	0	.273
Wilkins	5.11	2-0	24	24.2	21	14	14	1	10	19	0	.241
*Arroyo	6.38	2-3	7	36.2	52	33	26	2	26	18	0	.335

SHUTOUTS: Benson, Ritchie (1)
COMPLETE GAMES: Benson (2), Ritchie (1)

St. Louis

57-46: 1st

Acquisitions bring club help from both sides in bullpen



The club finally got relief help by obtaining **Jason Christiansen** from Pittsburgh for minor league SS **Jack Wilson** and by acquiring righthanded closer **Mike Timlin** from Baltimore for minor league OF/1B **Chris Richard** and minor league RHP **Mark Nussbeck**. Timlin will be used mostly as a setup man for RHP **Dave Veres**. Christiansen has had trouble the last two months after pitching well the first six weeks. He has been successful when he inherits runners, allowing only three of 21 to score. But he has had

trouble throwing strikes. With a solid fastball, curve and changeup, he should be more effective against lefthanders than he has been. The offense has not picked up for the ailing **Mark McGwire**. The club entered the week 7-12 since he went on the D.L. **3B Fernando Tatis** and CF **Jim Edmonds** were both 20-for-72 (.278), and LF **Ray Lankford** was 11-for-41. **Eduardo Perez** has been filling in at first. He hit safely in 10 straight games and seemed to ensure his staying with the club the rest of the season. The catching ranks continue to thin. With backup **Eli Marrero** (broken thumb) expected to miss another month, starter **Mike Matheny** suffered a cracked rib Friday against the Mets. He stayed in the lineup.

SCOUTING REPORT: RHP **Garrett Stephenson**, who usually can be counted on for seven innings an outing, has been a surprise. He has a good enough fastball to go with a better than adequate curveball and a developing changeup. His forte is location. He doesn't leave too many balls over the middle of the plate.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: The team has a three-pronged righthanded approach in its bullpen. **Matt Morris** continues in his sixth-to-eighth-inning role. Timlin will be the seventh- and eighth-inning pitcher as well as the closer when Veres needs a break. Timlin, a power pitcher, and Veres, who relies heavily on a split-finger pitch, probably are better suited to setup roles but between them should be able to close out enough games. —Rick Hummel

CARDINALS

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Perez	.356	15	45	7	16	3	8	.420	.622	0	11	3	0
Edmonds+	.332	100	346	99	115	30	72	.444	.650	9	109	70	4
Davis	.332	69	187	32	62	6	35	.417	.487	1	41	28	3
Polanco	.320	71	197	31	63	3	19	.340	.411	1	19	7	2
Tatis	.314	46	159	36	50	13	49	.431	.654	2	39	28	4
Vina+	.299	82	321	53	96	4	25	.391	.417	8	26	32	2
Drew+	.293	81	229	41	67	14	41	.393	.528	8	66	34	6
Renteria	.274	96	379	68	104	12	45	.336	.417	15	56	37	13
Wilkins+	.273	4	11	3	3	0	1	.385	.273	0	2	2	0
Lankford+	.252	81	246	44	62	16	46	.358	.508	3	90	42	3
Dunston	.248	65	145	17	36	9	34	.281	.503	2	29	4	2
Paquette	.246	88	276	33	68	9	44	.305	.431	4	58	24	10
Matheny	.240	84	271	28	65	4	26	.302	.336	0	66	23	4
Howard#	.195	71	118	11	23	6	26	.234	.390	1	31	5	1

GRAND SLAMS: Dunston (2), Davis, Drew, Howard, Marrero, Perez, Polanco, Tatis (1)

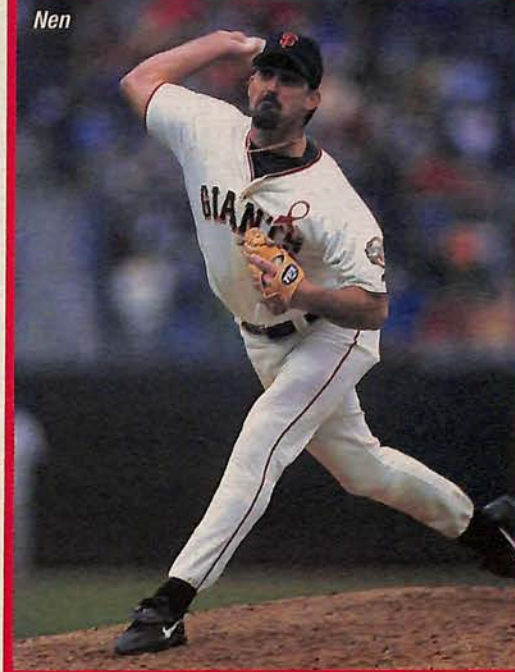
	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
Morris	2.45	0-2	14	29.1	28	8	8	1	15	9	2	.259
Veres	3.26	1-3	44	47.0	40	17	17	5	42	13	18	.241
Ankiel+	4.05	7-6	20	109.0	91	57	49	16	118	61	0	.232
Kile	4.36	12-6	22	142.1	134	76	69	25	132	37	0	.250
Stephenson	4.40	11-6	21	129.0	133	68	63	17	78	40	0	.268
James	4.50	0-2	28	26.0	26	13	13	7	24	12	1	.265
An. Benes	4.80	10-5	22	131.1	138	73	70	26	121	52	0	.273
Hentgen	5.26	9-8	21	119.2	124	74	70	19	69	57	0	.276
Slocumb	5.44	2-3	43	49.2	50	32	30	9	34	24	1	.266
Al. Benes	6.91	2-1	17	28.2	36	23	22	4	16	14	0	.308
Timlin	-	0-0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-

SHUTOUTS: Stephenson (1)

COMPLETE GAMES: Stephenson (2), An. Benes, Kile (1)

INSIDE THE N.L. WEST

Nen



Who's HOT

RHP **Robb Nen** has been Mr. Automatic in the ninth inning for the Giants. Through last Saturday, Nen had picked up 13 saves and two wins in July. In his first 15 innings of the month, Nen allowed one run and four hits while striking out 26.

Who's NOT

Giants LF **Barry Bonds** turned 36 last week, and he looked his age. Bonds had more strikeouts (15) than hits (13) in his first 18 games of July. **Dusty Baker** gave Bonds time off last week after he noticed that Bonds' bat speed was slipping.

CIRCLE THE CALENDAR

When the Diamondbacks go to Philadelphia Aug. 14-16, RHP **Curt Schilling** should get a start against his old club. The Diamondbacks expect Schilling to make 12 or 13 more starts before the end of the regular season. If the rotation stays as it is, Schilling will start Aug. 15 against the Phillies.

Keep an eye on

When RHP **Woody Williams** bats, he's one of the most productive Padres. His average is up to .360, and last week manager **Bruce Bochy** had his No. 8 batter sacrifice a runner to third to set up Williams. He delivered a sacrifice fly to the warning track.

High and inside

After losing 18 of 22 games and falling out of the postseason race, the Rockies officially decided that RHP **Rolando Arrojo** (5-9, 6.04 ERA) never was going to adjust to Coors Field, so they traded him to Boston.

TSN's Wired World

After failing in his half-season with the Cubs, RHP **Ismael Valdes** was traded back to L.A., where he pitched six years to less than rave reviews from teammates and club officials. For more on the Dodgers, visit:

sportingnews.com/baseball/teams/dodgers

PROSPECT WATCH

The Giants have a recent history of trading prospects before they reach the majors, but one RHP they may want to hang on to is **Jerome Williams**. Drafted in the first round last year out of a Hawaii high school, Williams was 5-4 with a 3.16 ERA for Class A San Jose. Opponents had batted worse than .200 against him.

Arizona

58-46: 1st

With Schilling, the mound is covered for the final run



You get him, you use him. The Diamondbacks plan to pitch new starter RHP **Curt Schilling** as they have LHP **Randy Johnson**: every fifth

JULY'S GRADES

OFFENSE	B
PITCHING	C-
DEFENSE	A

day. With the addition of Schilling, the club joins the Mets as the only teams with three of the National League's top 20 pitchers in ERA. Barring rainouts or other glitches, the top three starters—Johnson, Schilling and LHP **Brian Anderson**—will make 13 starts each over the rest of the season. That accounts for 39 of the final 60 games. ... What RF **Danny Bautista** has done for the

offense is almost as much as Schilling is supposed to do for the pitching. Bautista had his first career two-homer game in a 17-5 rout of the Cardinals and racked up a career-best 10-game hitting streak. Since coming over June 9 from the Marlins for utilityman **Andy Fox**, Bautista has batted .318 in 36 games, with four homers and 11 RBIs.

SCOUTING REPORT: Johnson's power lights up the radar guns and wows the fans, but he is a complete pitcher. In fact, his slider might be better than his fastball. The pitch is still 90 mph but breaks onto a righthanded hitter's shoes. And Johnson can throw a two-seam fastball, also around 90 mph but with some sink. He throws it for a strike, allowing batters to hit harmless ground balls, saving his pitch counts. Johnson's biggest weakness on the mound is his relatively slow delivery, which allows runners to steal easily.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: One reason the team got Schilling was because of RHP **Johnny Ruffin**—a reliever who hasn't pitched in the majors since 1996. When Arizona targeted Schilling, the club had to match Philadelphia's biggest needs—a closer and middle infielders. The Phillies focused on **Vicente Padilla** and **Byung-Hyun Kim** as closers. Arizona considers Kim untouchable but was willing to include Padilla because Ruffin (closing for Class AAA Tucson) was ready to move into a set-up role. **Travis Lee**'s struggles made him expendable, and including **Omar Daal** gave the Phillies a starter and Arizona payroll relief. —Ed Price

DIAMONDBACKS

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
*Ryan+	.375	4	8	1	3	0	1	.375	.750	0	1	0	0
*Cabrera	.368	13	38	7	14	4	13	.381	.763	0	12	2	0
Gonzalez+	.315	104	394	72	124	20	62	.406	.546	1	56	59	2
Colbrunn	.303	63	142	20	43	6	22	.429	.507	0	27	25	5
Miller	.291	65	213	32	62	9	30	.367	.498	2	48	25	6
Finley+	.290	102	366	71	106	27	75	.364	.577	9	57	40	2
Counsell+	.276	36	76	9	21	2	6	.368	.395	1	8	11	3
Womack+	.272	96	423	60	115	6	38	.300	.388	21	44	15	9
Williams	.272	40	151	15	41	3	11	.319	.411	1	22	10	3
Durazo+	.271	61	181	33	49	8	33	.382	.459	1	37	33	5
Bell	.261	99	383	59	100	11	42	.348	.420	3	60	51	6
Bautista	.253	81	174	23	44	8	23	.302	.454	4	30	12	2
Frias#	.224	51	85	14	19	2	6	.313	.318	2	11	11	5
Stinnett	.222	47	162	17	36	8	28	.296	.414	0	40	12	5

GRAND SLAMS: Harris, Miller (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
Johnson+	2.16	15-3	22	166.2	115	46	40	15	228	47	0	.197
Swindell+	2.25	2-3	38	48.0	37	13	12	4	39	11	1	.209
Kim	3.45	2-5	40	47.0	30	20	18	4	78	23	14	.179
*Guzman	3.70	3-1	4	24.1	21	10	10	1	19	9	0	.241
Schilling	3.73	7-6	17	120.2	116	50	50	17	101	34	0	.251
Plesac+	3.91	1-0	37	23.0	20	14	10	3	25	21	0	.235
Anderson+	3.96	8-4	22	143.1	152	68	63	24	73	22	0	.276
Morgan	4.24	4-2	39	74.1	82	35	35	10	34	27	5	.293
Springer	5.59	2-3	33	38.2	39	25	24	7	33	25	0	.260
Reynoso	5.79	7-7	19	102.2	115	68	66	15	54	32	0	.288
Mantei	6.33	1-1	29	27.0	24	20	19	4	35	21	7	.240

SHUTOUTS: Johnson (2)

COMPLETE GAMES: Johnson (6), Reynoso (1)

Colorado

50-52: 4th

Seven-player deal did little but dump Lansing's salary



G.M. Dan O'Dowd could have done better with Cleveland in exchange for RHP Rolando Arrojo (5-9, 6.04 ERA), but the key to last week's

seven-player deal with Boston was dumping the \$7.25 million guaranteed for 2B Mike Lansing (.258, 11 HRs, 47 RBIs at the time of the trade) after this year. That the club got 2B Jeff Frye and RHPs Brian Rose, John Wasdin and Jeff Taglienti was a bonus. Manager Buddy Bell says Frye will get most of the starts, with Todd Walker backing up. Frye, 34, hit .289 with

one homer and 13 RBIs in 69 games. Rose, 24, was demoted to Class AAA last month after going 3-5 with a 6.11 ERA in 53 innings as Boston's No. 5 starter. ... Don't blame defense for the team's tumble from first to fourth. Time and again, SS Neifi Perez has gone into the hole before gunning down the runner at first. Between them, 1B Todd Helton and 3B Jeff Cirillo would make at least one great play a game. Almost every game, the outfield of Larry Walker, Tom Goodwin and Jeffrey Hammonds will outplay any in baseball. And for what? The Rockies lost 19 of 24 through last Saturday.

SCOUTING REPORT: Bell is looking to give first-year closer Jose Jimenez a breather. He converted 15 of 17 save chances through July 3 but was swept away by the losing slide. He blew all three of his save chances during that time and couldn't protect a tie with two outs in the eighth July 25. But he pitched a scoreless inning July 21 and another July 22 against San Diego, when a save wasn't at stake. Confidence and inconsistent mechanics have hurt the righthander, who throws a hard sinker but has trouble throwing consecutive pitches from the same arm slot.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: LHP Brian Bohanon says a split-finger changeup he hasn't used in five years got him out of a first-inning jam last week. The split kept the Dodgers from digging in against his cut fastball. He needed something to help him get back on last year's 12-12 pace. The team needs him as a starter, though he has been most consistent in long relief. —Mike Klis

ROCKIES

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Huskey	.400	8	15	3	6	1	5	.471	.733	0	2	2	0
Helton+	.374	100	361	95	135	24	86	.470	.681	2	36	68	4
Hammonds	.373	79	279	63	104	17	81	.434	.627	7	54	31	2
Cirillo	.325	98	369	80	120	10	80	.393	.501	0	35	45	9
L. Walker+	.320	69	256	53	82	7	40	.414	.516	4	33	37	0
T. Walker+	.318	10	22	2	7	1	4	.318	.591	0	2	0	0
Mayne+	.304	81	237	30	72	6	50	.385	.447	1	32	34	3
Hunter	.294	65	170	35	50	1	12	.372	.347	14	27	20	2
Perez#	.284	102	384	45	109	5	49	.309	.419	2	39	18	12
*Petrick	.276	12	29	9	8	0	1	.364	.448	1	7	3	0
Goodwin+	.272	90	316	65	86	5	47	.369	.396	39	75	50	3
Shumpert	.269	69	156	33	42	4	26	.357	.474	6	23	18	3
Frye	.250	1	4	1	1	0	0	.250	.250	1	1	0	0

GRAND SLAMS: Goodwin (2), Hammonds (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
Myers+	1.98	0-1	46	27.1	14	6	6	2	22	12	1	.156
White+	2.13	7-1	46	55.0	44	14	13	4	61	10	1	.217
Jimenez	3.86	4-0	43	39.2	40	17	17	3	28	19	15	.260
Tavarez	4.85	6-2	39	55.2	62	33	30	8	37	25	1	.284
Astacio	5.16	8-7	22	148.1	162	88	85	29	146	56	0	.277
Yoshii	5.62	4-11	20	117.0	140	75	73	19	61	33	0	.304
Chouinard	5.87	0-1	7	7.2	7	5	5	0	1	4	0	.259
Bohanon+	6.39	5-7	21	93.0	102	69	66	14	56	47	0	.279
Lee	11.12	0-0	7	5.2	10	9	7	3	6	6	1	.357
Carrara	22.85	0-1	2	4.1	11	11	11	2	6	4	0	.478
Rose	-	0-0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-
Wasdin	-	0-0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-

SHUTOUTS: None
COMPLETE GAMES: Astacio (2)

Los Angeles

55-48: 3rd

Beltre stops wasting talent by starting strong in 2nd half



3B Adrian Beltre thrills the Dodgers and tries their patience, sometimes simultaneously. Beltre rewarded the Dodgers' patience with a strong start in the second half,

JULY'S GRADES	
OFFENSE	B
Gary Sheffield and Eric Karros are playing great. Shawn Green must do more.	
DEFENSE	C+
Smooth-fielding shortstop Alex Cora has provided a major boost in the infield.	
PITCHING	B
Darren Dreifort and Chan Ho Park pitching to their potential puts the Dodgers in the race.	

showing better judgment and an improved work ethic. Many team officials were worried that the talented 21-year-old might slack off after signing a three-year, \$5.05-million deal in the offseason. Sure enough, Beltre took less batting practice, was even more undisciplined at the plate and was awful in the field during the first half. But Beltre ended his bad

act after several conversations with people whom he respects. They made it clear he was wasting his talent. ... RHP Jeff Shaw regained the job as the team's closer by working 7 1/3 scoreless innings in his first seven games after coming off the disabled list. The velocity on his fastball is the best it has been all season, and his breaking pitches have been much sharper as well.

SCOUTING REPORT: RHP Ismael Valdes, reacquired by the Dodgers last week, throws only in the high 80s, but the ball appears to move much faster because of his command. When Valdes is throwing well, he frustrates batters with an outstanding curveball and slider. He works the corners well and can throw any of his pitches at any point in counts for strikes. Valdes' performance often went to another level in the first half last season when he encountered trouble. He regularly pitched out of jams, seemingly adding zip to his fastball whenever necessary. The knock against Valdes is that he looks for help from the bullpen after pitching five, six or seven strong innings. He collapsed mentally down the stretch last year because the Dodgers didn't give him run support. He must show that he has matured and gotten tougher.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: CF Devon White stabilized the outfield after returning from the disabled list. White covers much more ground than Todd Hollandsworth, and White's experience and instincts add to his effectiveness. His return makes things easier for LF Gary Sheffield and RF Shawn Green. —Jason Reid

DODGERS

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Donnels+	.429	6	7	2	3	0	1	.429	.714	0	2	0	0
Sheffield	.340	101	356	82	121	34	87	.457	.685	3	42	77	7
Hundley#	.323	48	164	31	53	17	44	.415	.701	0	34	27	5
Leyritz	.316	15	19	0	6	0	6	.409	.316	0	4	3	0
Grudzielanek	.298	93	396	74	118	5	31	.350	.414	9	57	27	11
Hansen+	.289	67	83	11	24	5	19	.410	.566	0	21	17	2
White+	.287	27	101	16	29	3	10	.333	.396	2	23	7	2
Green+	.282	103	387	71	109	17	70	.390	.504	16	80	66	5
Beltre	.272	82	323	39	88	9	51	.325	.427	8	56	26	16
Kreuter#	.268	50	142	27	38	5	16	.439	.437	1	28	43	3
Karros	.266	100	376	61	100	27	81	.358	.529	1	84	54	4
Cora+	.261	53	180	25	47	3	12	.323	.417	1	21	13	6
Hollandsworth+	.234	81	261	42	61	8	24	.314	.372	11	61	30	2
Elster	.223	58	193	26	43	11	28	.324	.435	0	48	29	10

GRAND SLAMS: Beltre, Green (2), Elster, Hundley, Karros, Sheffield (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
Brown	2.40	10-4	21	154.0	111	45	41	17	137	34	0	.200
Fetters	2.45	3-1	31	29.1	17	8	8	3	27	17	5	.179
Adams	3.05	4-3	41	56.0	51	23	19	5	32	24	2	.239
Osuna	3.12	2-4	29	43.1	29	16	15	3	46	24	0	.191
Herges	3.14	7-0	42	63.0	56	25	22	6	57	25	0	.240
Park	4.14	11-7	22	139.0	110	70	64	16	119	85	0	.220
Dreifort	4.46	7-7	20	119.0	108	71	59	19	99	50	0	.240
Valdes	5.37	2-4	12	67.0	71	40	40	17	45	27	0	.273
Perez+	5.48	4-5	21	115.0	144	74	70	21	52	26	0	.309
Shaw	6.23	2-4	37	34.2	44	26	24	6	22	11	16	.297
Olson	9.00	0-0	2	2.0	3	2	2	0	0	0	0	.333

SHUTOUTS: Brown, Dreifort (1)
COMPLETE GAMES: Brown (4), Dreifort, Park (1)

The Sporting News FANTASY SPORTS STANDINGS

FANTASY BASEBALL Wk. 16 - TOP TEN

Rk.	Name	Location	Wkly Score	STD Rank
1	JOHN CARDWELL	MOUNT LAUREL, NJ	40072.5	103
2	CHRIS MARSHALL	DENVER, CO	39852	1544
3	ROBERT MCBEAN	CALGARY, AL	39826	311
4	PAUL GARRETT	FRIENDSWOOD, TX	39779	191
5	JOHN YOUNG	ALIQUIPPA, PA	39715	442
6	ANTHONY MAHON	EUREKA, CA	39509.5	115
7	ROMAIN CADOT	SANTA MONICA, CA	39314.5	336
8	CORY SMITH	SPRINGFIELD, MO	39314	71
9	LOUIS VIGLIOTTI	COLONIA, NJ	39177	63
10	EDWARD TAYLOR	GRAND JUNCTION, CO	39156	309

FANTASY BASEBALL FREE AGENTS WK. 19

ID#	Player	POS	Team	Value
1	1271 Jamey Wright	SP	MIL	450,000
2	7114 Johnny Damon	OF	KC	1,650,000
3	2155 Ben Molina	C	ANA	500,000
4	4125 Ron Belliard	2B	MIL	820,000
5	5102 Derek Jeter	SS	NYN	1,880,000

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San Diego

45-58: 5th

Clement works hard, but his inconsistency is troubling



The team viewed RHP **Matt Clement** as a large building block when it guaranteed him \$8.5 million in a four-year deal arranged in February.

JULY'S GRADES

OFFENSE D

Too many easy outs in this lineup, which is wasting good work by Ryan Klesko.

PITCHING A

Good work by the starters and outstanding relief by Donnie Wall and Kevin Walker.

DEFENSE B

After a dismal first-half showing, the club finally is starting to improve.

It was a robust show of faith considering Clement wouldn't have been eligible for arbitration until after next season. The club figured it could save money down the road by giving Clement the security of a multiyear deal. It was impressed with the movement on his pitches and the strength of his arm. Clement, 25, may pan out. But his inconsistency has gone

beyond the norm. He has become alarmingly skittish. Clement works exceptionally hard at his craft. But he isn't nearly the pitcher on the road that he is in San Diego, and he has trouble adjusting to other variables, such as day starts and unplanned throws to the bases. ... **SS Damian Jackson** isn't making good use of his speed. He has 70 strikeouts in 281 at-bats and an on-base percentage of .325.

SCOUTING REPORT: CF **Ruben Rivera** remains a raw talent who shows exciting power on occasion but still is generally overmatched at the plate. A year ago, Rivera couldn't handle ordinary fastballs—or much else—and batted .195. He has shown only slight improvement. Rivera will hammer fastballs in a certain lower spot over the plate. But his looping, often tardy swing makes solid contact against little other than hanging off-speed pitches. He is a good center fielder who is excellent at tracking down deeper shots.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: IF **Dave Magadan** says he was hitting too many pitcher's pitches—the 2-1 and 1-0 deliveries that looked good coming toward the plate but weren't down the middle. Hence Magadan's .164 average after 92 games. Magadan's struggles might have had something to do with age (37), but more than anything, it showed the fine line between success and failure for a pinch hitter. Magadan is a proven hitter. By zeroing in on better pitches, he came back with three solid weeks and became one of the team's better RBI men. He's a valuable hitting mentor. —Tom Krasovic

PADRES

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Klesko+	.319	90	310	57	99	21	67	.402	.610	12	50	43	4
Martin+	.307	92	342	60	105	11	27	.359	.477	6	53	27	7
Owens	.303	95	380	59	115	4	32	.360	.389	20	42	33	0
Nevin	.280	99	382	58	107	19	69	.344	.497	2	94	38	18
Boone	.257	103	374	47	96	18	66	.333	.452	8	81	41	13
Hernandez	.251	58	191	16	48	2	25	.316	.340	1	26	16	5
Jackson	.235	86	281	39	66	3	17	.325	.338	12	70	38	16
Rivera	.233	79	253	39	59	12	36	.315	.443	3	76	23	2
Magadan+	.231	59	78	6	18	1	10	.362	.321	0	12	16	0
*Nicholson#	.222	30	81	6	18	1	7	.267	.346	1	27	4	2
*DeHaan+	.211	57	76	14	16	1	8	.247	.316	3	29	4	0
Gonzalez	.210	57	167	12	35	3	16	.277	.317	1	20	13	2
Vitiello	.200	7	15	1	3	1	2	.200	.400	0	1	0	0
Davis#	.111	17	45	4	5	1	3	.146	.222	0	15	2	0

GRAND SLAMS: Boone, Nevin (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
Wall	2.93	4-2	30	40.0	24	13	13	1	18	15	1	.178
*Eaton	3.28	2-2	11	71.1	63	26	26	9	54	37	0	.240
*Tollberg	3.28	2-1	8	49.1	46	23	18	7	33	12	0	.249
*Walker+	3.80	3-0	45	45.0	35	23	19	4	34	21	0	.211
Hoffman	4.12	3-4	42	43.2	43	22	20	5	57	7	24	.253
Whiteside	4.33	2-3	27	35.1	32	21	17	6	27	16	0	.241
Williams	4.50	5-3	11	74.0	71	37	37	14	54	27	0	.253
Erds	4.76	0-0	5	5.2	5	3	3	0	3	2	0	.238
Meadows	4.98	7-8	21	119.1	139	72	66	22	52	47	0	.295
Almanzar	5.07	1-3	42	49.2	46	29	28	10	39	16	0	.243
Clement	5.62	9-10	22	129.2	129	90	81	18	106	81	0	.256

SHUTOUTS: None
COMPLETE GAMES: None

San Francisco

56-45: 2nd

There will be no gambling with Nathan's health



The coming week will prove to be a turning point for two pitchers whose fates are connected. RHP **Joe Nathan**, 25, is hoping to come off his second stint on the disabled list with shoulder troubles. If his shoulder pain recurs, Nathan may be headed for exploratory surgery, even if he is needed to help win the division. When Nathan is activated, **Russ Ortiz** likely will go to the bullpen. Ortiz's control problems recurred in Saturday's loss to the Cubs, and he is clearly headed for a demotion to long relief. ...

While G.M. **Brian Sabean** was busy trying to swing a deal for a reliever before the trading deadline, he insisted he would not make a trade to react to the Diamondbacks' acquisition of **Curt Schilling**. Actually, Sabean does not believe Schilling makes Arizona appreciably better. Since '97, Schilling is just 1-2 with a 4.43 ERA in six starts against the Giants. ... Manager **Dusty Baker** notes that 2B **Jeff Kent**'s bat has slowed down some. Look for Baker to find some days off for Kent to help him get his bat speed back.

SCOUTING REPORT: **Armando Rios** was supposed to be the next great hitter in the farm system. There were many calls in the news media and from fans to give him the right-field job over injury-prone **Ellis Burks**. But while Rios is a fine situational hitter, he has not shown the consistency needed to play every day. He is vulnerable to breaking balls, especially from lefthanders. But Rios has a great arm, and his presence in right field helps pitchers by keeping runners from taking the extra base.

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME: RHP **Livan Hernandez** is closing in on a .300 batting average, but that's not the only benefit of his ability to hit like a position player. Last Friday in Chicago, Hernandez was locked in a 0-0 game with two runners on base and two outs in the seventh, and he was due up. Any other Giants pitcher would have left for a pinch hitter. Hernandez, obviously pitching well, stayed in and was still in the game when **Rich Aurilia** hit a game-winning, two-run homer in the ninth inning. —Henry Schulman

GIANTS

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	OBP	SLG	SB	K	BB	E
Burks	.347	74	239	46	83	12	45	.423	.594	5	28	32	4
Kent	.332	100	379	73	126	24	89	.413	.617	7	71	53	8
Snow+	.305	97	351	51	107	13	60	.380	.479	1	73	40	5
Bonds+	.300	87	297	78	89	32	65	.425	.700	9	49	66	3
Crespo#	.295	54	78	8	23	2	18	.349	.436	1	17	4	1
Martinez	.292	54	113	20	33	3	19	.355	.513	0	12	11	1
Davis	.287	48	115	21	33	4	11	.322	.417	0	20	4	6
Aurilia	.283	85	314	43	89	11	47	.342	.443	0	56	30	13
Estalella	.275	64	189	32	52	11	40	.385	.556	3	47	35	1
Mueller#	.269	96	357	57	96	6	36	.325	.378	3	39	27	7
*Murray	.266	67	128	24	34	1	14	.361	.359	5	18	19	2
*Rios+	.262	77	168	25	44	6	36	.342	.470	2	33	22	5
Benard+	.261	94	349	65	91	9	38	.337	.395	13	64	39	0
Mirabelli	.252	55	155	17	39	6	21	.352	.426	1	35	24	5

GRAND SLAMS: Estalella, Estes, Snow (1)

	ERA	W-L	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	K	BB	SV	Avg.
*del Toro	0.00	0-0	1	2.0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	.143
Nen	1.91	3-3	45	42.1	26	13	9	4	56	15	25	.174
Rodriguez	2.88	3-1	51	56.1	45	23	18	4	65	30	2	.223
Rueter+	3.61	7-6	20	114.2	120	53	46	13	45	43	0	.279
Estes+	3.99	10-3	18	115.0	114	55	51	5	69	71	0	.270
Hernandez	4.01	10-7	21	150.1	172	78	67	14	106	48	0	.293
Gardner	4.46	7-4	19	80.2	93	45	40	11	50	22	0	.290
Embree+	5.62	1-3	41	41.2	49	27	26	3	38	20	1	.304
*Fultz+	6.22	3-1	39	46.1	48	33	32	6	38	24	1	.282
Ortiz	6.46	5-10	21	118.1	141	92	85	24	93	72	0	.303
*Linebrink	11.57	0-0	3	2.1	7	3	3	1	0	2	0	.500

SHUTOUTS: Estes (2)
COMPLETE GAMES: Estes (3), Hernandez (2)

ALL-LEAGUE LEADERS

AVERAGE	ERA
Garcia, Bos394	P. Martinez, Bos1.38
Erstad, Ana369	Wells, Tor3.69
Delgado, Tor364	Suzuki, KC3.73
Martinez, Sea350	Clemens, NY3.78
RUNS	WINS
A. Rodriguez, Sea87	Wells, Tor16
Delgado, Tor85	Heredia, Oak12
Damon, Chi83	Baldwin, Chi12
Durham, KC82	Helling, Tex12
	P. Martinez, Bos12
HITS	LOSSES
Erstad, Ana167	Mays, Min11
Sweeney, KC140	Radke, Min11
Delgado, Tor136	
DOUBLES	COMPLETE GAMES
Delgado, Tor40	Wells, Tor5
Olerud, Sea35	Mussina, Bal4
Garcia, Bos35	P. Martinez, Bos4
2 tied with31	
TRIPLES	INNINGS PITCHED
Guzman, Min14	Radke, Min159.1
	Mussina, Bal158.2
HOME RUNS	Rogers, Tex151.0
Delgado, Tor32	STRIKEOUTS
Batista, Tor31	Per 9 IP
Glaus, Ana31	P. Martinez, Bos12.35
Anderson, Ana30	Colon, Cle10.38
RBI	SAVES
Martinez, Sea97	Jones, Det28
Williams, NY94	Wetteland, Tex26
Delgado, Tor93	Sasaki, Sea25
Ja. Giambi, Oak91	Percival, Ana25

N.L. LEAGUE LEADERS

AVERAGE	ERA
Helton, Col374	Johnson, Ari2.16
Hammonds, Col373	Brown, LA2.40
Castillo, Fla364	Leiter, NY3.30
Piazza, NY350	Maddux, Atl3.36
RUNS	WINS
Edmonds, StL99	Benson, Pit3.39
Helton, Col95	LOSSES
Bagwell, Hou90	Parris, Cin13
HITS	Lima, Hou13
Viola, Mon135	COMPLETE GAMES
Helton, Col135	Johnson, Ari6
A. Jones, Atl127	4 tied with4
DOUBLES	INNINGS PITCHED
Viola, Mon35	Johnson, Ari166.2
Helton, Col35	Lieber, Chi163.2
Cirillo, Col31	Maddux, Atl163.1
TRIPLES	STRIKEOUTS
Perez, Col8	Per 9 IP
Goodwin, Col8	Johnson, Ari12.31
Womack, Ari8	Ankley, StL9.74
HOME RUNS	SAVES
Sheffield, LA34	Alfonseca, Fla30
Bonds, SF32	Benitez, NY25
Griffey Jr., Cin32	Nen, SF25
Sosa, Chi31	Hoffman, SD24
RBI	Aguilera, Chi23
Sosa, Chi92	
Griffey Jr., Cin90	
Kent, SF89	
Sheffield, LA87	

Southern comfort

After an injury-marred rookie season, Ricky Williams is finding the Saints a better fit this time around

By Jeff Duncan

Midway through a recent Saints practice, running back Ricky Williams approached coach Jim Haslett for a chat. For most players, that hardly would have been earth-shattering news. Haslett might talk to two dozen players during a two-hour workout, but the introverted Williams rarely, if ever, initiates conversation.

"It kind of surprised me," Haslett says. "He's usually so quiet."

Ever so slowly, one of the NFL's biggest non-conformists is conforming.

"I think we're getting to know him better, and he's getting more comfortable with us," Saints general manager Randy Mueller says.

After ranking second on the team in fines last season, Williams has not missed or been late to a meeting, practice or workout during the offseason. Although he prefers anonymity, Williams has been a ready and willing interview subject. And after one recent practice, he signed autographs and posed for photos for more than 30 minutes in suffocating south Louisiana.

"I'm just enjoying it," Williams says. "I'm learning the new system, and it's always fun to learn. ... I think I'm probably more comfortable than I was at this time last year. I know what to expect and what's expected from me."

Expectations were unrealistic for Williams as a rookie. Hailed as the player who would rescue the franchise, he suffered in the vortex of the Saints' grim 3-13 season. He was ridiculed in the news media and by teammates about his infamous contract, was hampered by injuries all season and slipped into an isolated funk that left him depressed and despondent.

"The media put him on a pedestal," Haslett says. "That's tough when a guy is 22 years old coming into the NFL, and everybody is looking at him to be the savior."

Owner Tom Benson's offseason housecleaning has revived Williams, giving him a fresh start in his second NFL season. He has a new agent, a new head coach, a new quarterback, a new fullback, and, most important, a new attitude as the Saints begin the Haslett era.

"I feel great," Williams says. "I'm optimistic. I don't feel any pressure. I know if I come to work and work hard every day, I put myself in the best position to win and to be a good football player."

So far, the new and improved Williams has done everything right. He is more mature and professional off the field and more confident and aggressive on it.

The Saints expect a lot from Williams in 2000. Offensive coordinator Mike McCarthy has designed his West Coast offense around Williams' myriad talents. McCarthy plans to put the ball in Williams' hands 20 to 25 times a game. He will play an expanded role in the passing game, often split wide of the hash marks to create mismatches with linebackers. The Saints envision Williams as

an every-down back in the mold of Green Bay's Dorsey Levens and Denver's Terrell Davis.

"If Ricky just learns the system and stays healthy, he's going to get his 1,200 yards and 40 catches," Mueller says. "That's built in."

Williams will run behind one of the league's most underrated lines. Bookend tackles Willie Roaf and Kyle Turley are among the league's best. Chris Naeole, Tom Ackerman, Wally Williams and Jerry Fontenot are capable veterans for the interior spots.

The unit was hamstrung last season by offensive coordinator Danny Abramowicz's pedestrian scheme. In film evaluation, the new Saints coaches were shocked at the way defensive linemen came clean on running plays. Williams was stuffed for negative yardage on 43 of his 253 carries, a league high for backs with more than 250 attempts. He averaged just 3.5 yards a rush.

McCarthy's scheme will rely heavily on zone blocking up front, allowing Williams to pick his lanes on stretch plays with his uncanny vision and natural timing.

"Ricky has looked great,"

Roaf says. "He's in great shape right now. If he stays healthy, he is

going to have a big year."

The additions of quarterback Jeff Blake and starting receivers Joe Horn and Jake Reed should prevent enemy coordinators from fearlessly stacking eight defenders in the box. Williams also will be aided by 240-pound fullback Terrelle Smith, whom the Saints ranked as the best lead blocker in the 2000 draft. Smith, a former line-backer, should be a significant upgrade over Aaron Craver and former undrafted rookie free agent Marvin Powell.

"I've liked Ricky since I saw him in college," former Bills coach Marv Levy says. "He got nicked up last year and tried to play through it. He has great pride and gutted it out. I admire his ability, and he works his tail off. I expect him to have a big year. I'm pulling for him."

Williams carries the same 230-pound weight he played at last season, but teammates and coaches say he appears lighter on his feet and quicker in and out of his cuts. The elbow, ankle and toe injuries that hampered him have healed.

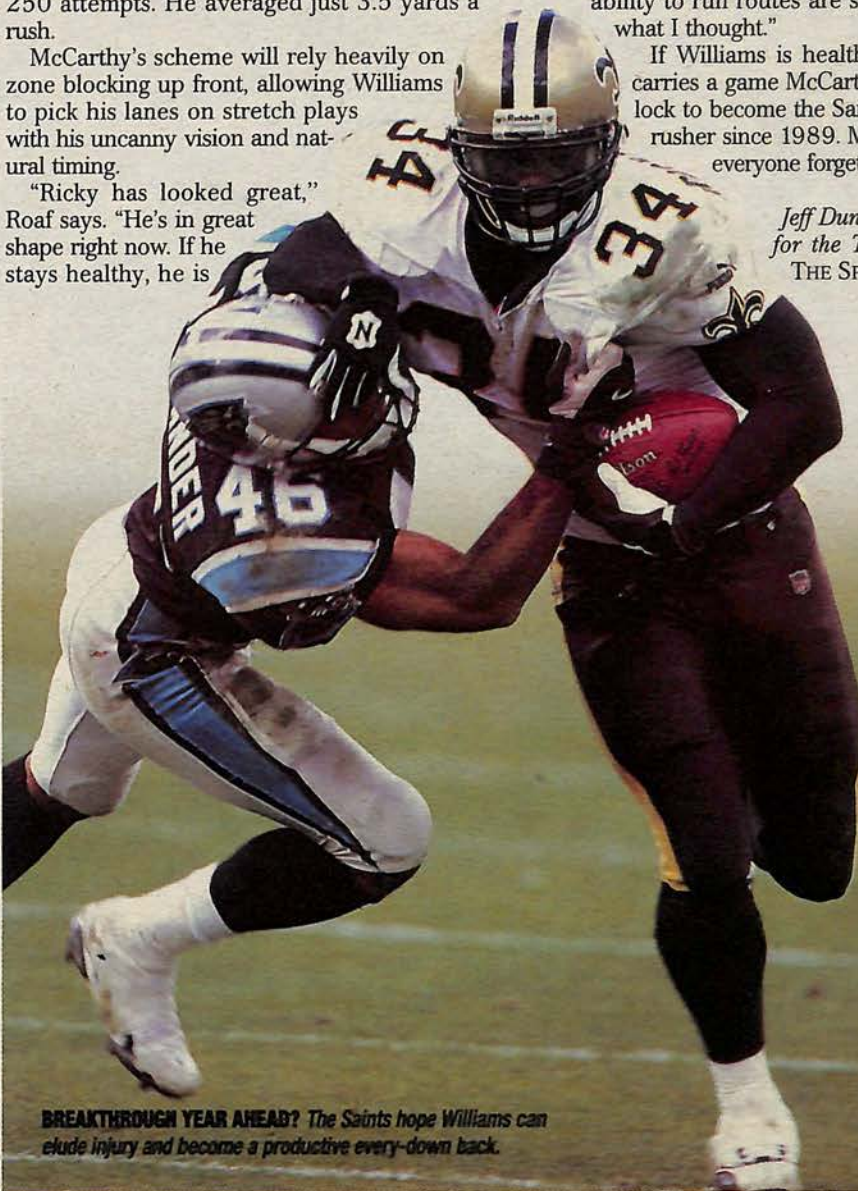
"I love the new offense," Williams says. "They give me the ball in space, and that's all you really ask for as a running back."

With so many factors leaning in his favor, it shouldn't be difficult for Williams to double his 884-yard rookie rushing total. Agent Leigh Steinberg wisely has advised Williams to concentrate on football this season. With fewer distractions and a fresh start, Williams appears ready to blossom.

"He's a very instinctive football player," running backs coach Dave Atkins says. "His hands and his ability to run routes are so much better than what I thought."


If Williams is healthy and gets the 20 carries a game McCarthy promises, he is a lock to become the Saints' first 1,000-yard rusher since 1989. Moreover, he'll make everyone forget about 1999. **TSN**

Jeff Duncan covers the Saints for the Times-Picayune and THE SPORTING NEWS.



BREAKTHROUGH YEAR AHEAD? The Saints hope Williams can elude injury and become a productive every-down back.

BOB LEVERONE/TSN



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reality loses its hold on
us, and we believe if this
one thing can happen,
maybe anything can.
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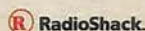
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Dan Pompei

Insider

Carolina won't ask White, Swann to play leading roles

What did the Panthers get by signing Reggie White and Eric Swann? The same thing a movie producer would get by hiring Marlon Brando and Charlton Heston for bit parts—two

once great, now dusty performers whose name value creates wild expectations.

George Seifert, the sage coach of the Panthers and a man who has good reason to quell runaway optimism, put it in perspective: "They are situational players. None of this guarantees anything. Some things might look good on paper, but that's just how people perceive it. It doesn't mean a damn thing."

There is a chance Swann might not make the Panthers' opening-day roster. With his history of knee problems and questionable desire and his current inability to practice, Swann remains a giant unknown. He was once a dominant defensive tackle, but he missed 18 games the last two seasons. One NFL physician who examined Swann pegged his durability limit at 10 games, tops.

White, however, seems a good bet to contribute after a year away from football. In fact, allowing White to remain retired would be like moving to the next barbecued rib before you could see the bone. Just two years ago, he had a conference-leading 16 sacks for the Packers. "If he's in shape, he can play," says Seahawks vice president of football operations Ted Thompson, who was with the Packers in 1998. "Knowing Reggie, he'll play and play well."

Some will tell you White benefited from his linemates in '98 and didn't deserve all those sacks. Don't believe it. "Put it this way," says Tony Ramirez, who felt White's thunder in two games as the Lions' right tackle that year, "I'm glad they moved me to the left side this year."

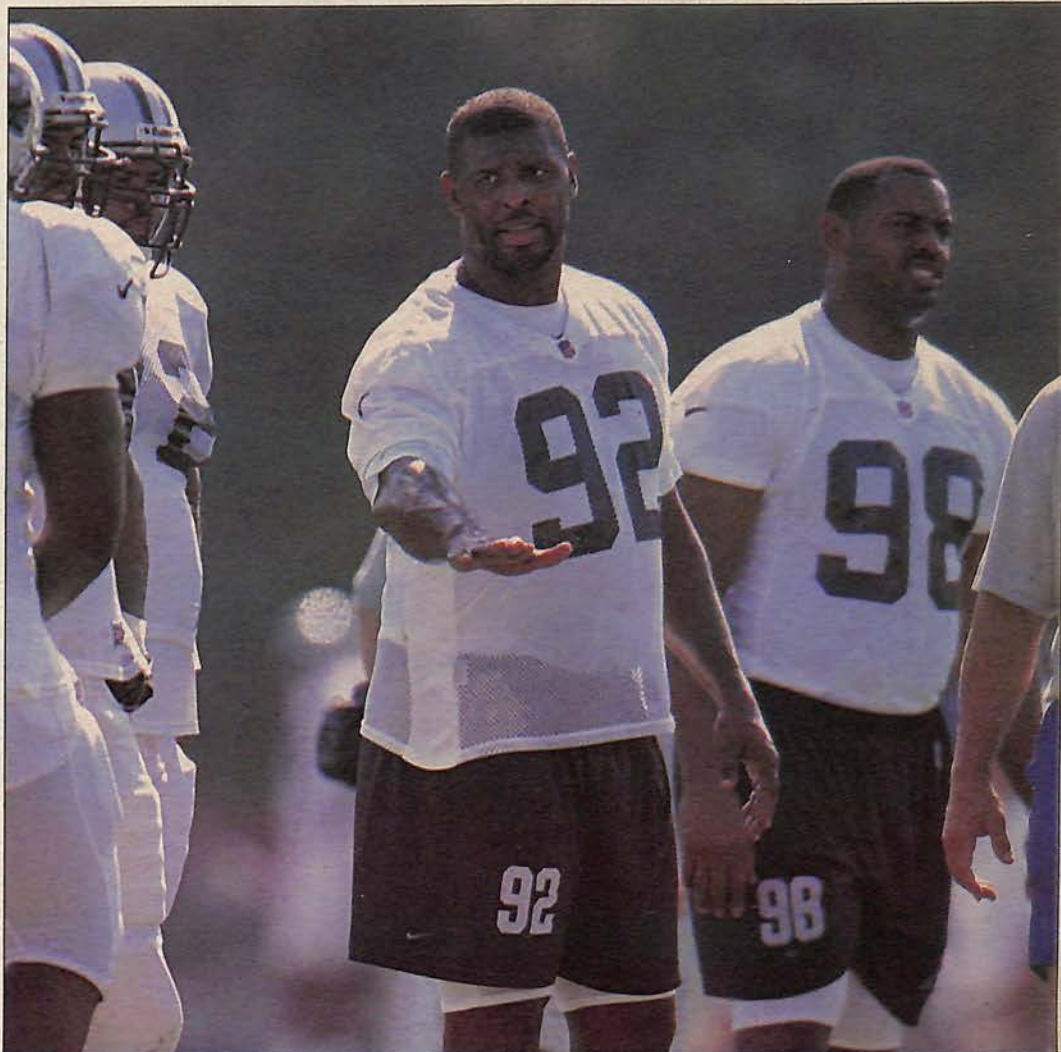
It is true White wore down as the season went on. Only one of his sacks came in the Packers' last five games. While walking off the practice field at training camp in Spartanburg, S.C., last week, White admitted he was tired at the end of the '98 season and that his shoulders were giving him problems. The year before, it was his back. White's inability to hold up through the course of a season is apparently the reason Packers general manager Ron Wolf wasn't willing to accommodate White's desires to return last year or this year despite the Packers' suspect defensive line.

The Panthers won't use White the way he was used in '98. Because of injuries to others, he played nearly 82 percent of the Packers' defensive snaps in '98, way more than a player who turned 37 should have. Seifert plans to treat White like an antique car—taking great care with him and using him only when the conditions are right. The plan is for White to play 15 to 20 plays a game, mostly in nickel situations. A similar plan exists for Swann.

"If we could get any more than that out of them, that would be frosting on the cake," Seifert says.

time. He thinks White could be one of those players, and he might be right.

Even if Swann and White still can rush the passer, their presence poses some problems. The Panthers likely will have to cut at least one of their young defensive linemen to accommodate White and Swann. It could be '98 third-round pick Chuck Wiley, a 16-game starter last year. And the two old-timers, at the least, will take playing time from such young players as Michael Rucker, Jason Peter, Jay Williams, Alvin McKinley



EASY DOES IT: The plan is to use White (92) and Swann (98) 15 to 20 plays a game, mostly in nickel situations and probably on some short-yardage downs. There's no guarantee Swann will make the roster.

But the frosting is often the best part. In fact, I would rather see White and Swann lined up on first down than on third. Let the wiry 265-pound guys chase the quarterback. Get these 300-pound bull elephants to stop the run. Few players have had the ability to blow up a run like White and Swann. Their raw power has a better chance of enduring than their quicks. Hence, White and Swann might be more valuable in creating third-and-longs rather than trying to solve them. At the least, they should be incorporated into short-yardage situations.

White and Swann probably won't be the pass rushers they were. Seifert says he has seen older players lose something off their pass rush without losing their flair for making a big play at a critical

and Gillis Wilson.

In fact, when asked why he chose the Panthers, Swann, a former Cardinal, says, "The Panthers are very committed to winning now, winning today. That's important."

Player development is also important. Head coaches who double as personnel czars often barter tomorrow for today. What they sometimes fail to realize is one quick fix can lead to another, and draft picks get pushed deeper into the closet. The Panthers must be wary of that.

What's nice about these signings is they won't cause financial problems. This year, White and Swann will take up a combined \$980,000 in salary-cap space. Swann signed a one year deal for the veteran minimum of \$440,000. The Panthers

can cut their ties with White after this year and have him count only \$460,000 against the cap next year.

Still, bringing in aging mercenaries can threaten the foundation of a team. What will young players think when they see veterans who rarely practice getting opportunities they thought they earned with hard work? It's a serious enough issue that Seifert addressed the team about it before the ink was dry on the contracts of Swann and White.

"I told them I always thought that the

head coach has the right to treat players differently," he says. "It's a team, and we have to look at how each part functions best. That can vary. We don't have to treat everybody exactly the same."

If White and Swann provide some flashbacks from earlier in their careers, they'll deserve special treatment. Otherwise, they'll be in the way. **TSN**

Senior writer Dan Pompei covers the NFL for THE SPORTING NEWS. E-mail him at pompei@sportingnews.com.

More air for McNair

The Steve McNair enhancement program continues in Nashville. In McNair's sixth season, the Titans are searching for ways to improve their quarterback by improving the galaxy that revolves around him.

There's nothing that improves a quarterback more than a good receiver, and the Titans signed one last week in former Bengal Carl Pickens. The hope is Pickens will give McNair more passing yards by running with the ball after the catch.

But McNair can help Pickens and the other Titans receivers gain yards after the catch by improving his accuracy. New offensive coordinator Mike Heimerdinger is trying to force that issue.

"A great quarterback in this league has to be very accurate and not just happy with a completion," says Heimerdinger, the former Broncos receivers coach who replaced Les Steckel in the offseason. "You throw it in spots where guys can run with it and make a short pass a long one."

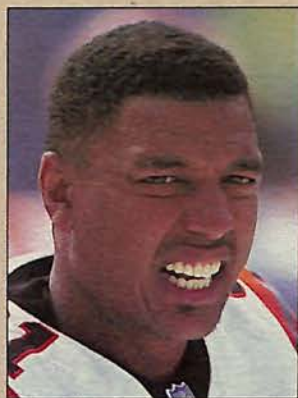
Heimerdinger is making some changes he hopes will allow the offense to capitalize on McNair's skills. In an attempt to get McNair to use more of the field, there will be fewer sight adjustments by receivers. Now, McNair will be forced to go through his progression of receivers instead of locking on to one receiver and waiting for an adjustment to free him up.

The Titans also are asking McNair to make more pre-snap adjustments on the line with motion and protection. In the past, they didn't want to overload him. Coach Jeff Fisher doesn't feel the need to do that anymore after McNair spent more time than ever around the team this offseason and reported in the best shape of his NFL life, down 8 pounds to 226.

"I don't think Steve has been challenged to throw the ball," Titans general manager Floyd Reese says. "We've canned him up a little, which you have to do with a young quarterback. Now at some point, he has to step forward." —D.P.



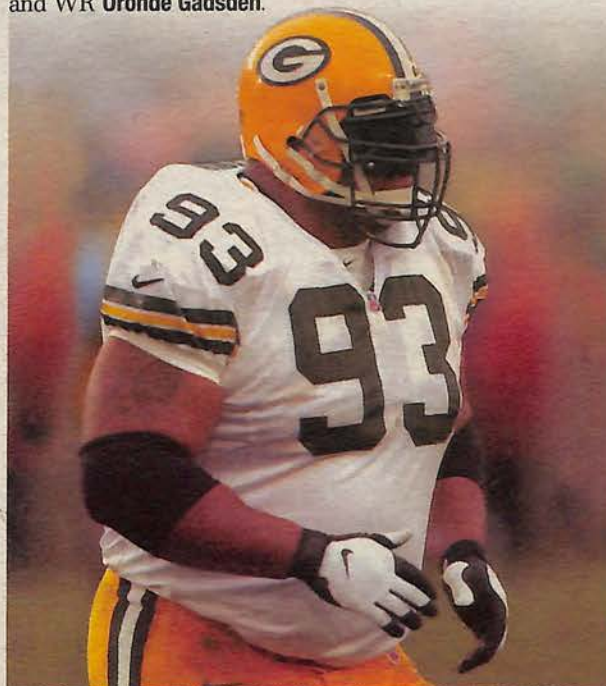
HITTING HIS SPOTS: McNair is working to improve his accuracy, which should lead to bigger pass plays.



NEW ADDITION: Pickens will make yards after the catch.

inside dish

Even if CB **Thomas Smith** doesn't bat down a single pass for the Bears, he already has helped the team by being a positive influence on fellow CB **Walt Harris**. Since Smith has been around, the Bears have seen Harris work harder and show more toughness. ... LB **Nate Webster** wasn't even on some teams' draft boards because of character concerns, but the Bucs, who are sticklers for character, think he will be a solid citizen. They particularly like the way Webster hangs out all day at team headquarters. ... The Ravens were interested in bringing in DT **Gilbert Brown** for a workout, but Brown tried to stall for a few days. That raised questions about whether Brown has been working overtime with the fork and knife. Brown isn't the player he was, but he can help some team if his weight is under control. ... The Cowboys tried desperately to sign QB **Doug Johnson** after he went undrafted in April, but Johnson chose to accept less money from the Falcons. Johnson bought the sales pitch from coach **Dan Reeves** and vice president of football operations **Ron Hill** in part because the Falcons' quarterback situation was less stable. It looks like the Cowboys' instincts were correct because Johnson has been lighting it up for the Falcons in camp. He's a keeper. ... Over the course of one grueling day, huge Dolphins rookie OT **Todd Wade** (6-8, 325) lost 21 pounds. It took a team-record six bags of IV fluid to replenish him. ... Also in the Dolphins' camp, there wasn't enough figurative room in the front office for new personnel vice president **Rick Spielman** and director of football operations **Bob Ackles**, so Ackles, a longtime friend of coach **Dave Wannstedt's**, is expected to move on. Spielman recently handled negotiations for the contracts of DT **Daryl Gardener** and WR **Oronde Gadsden**.



BIG MAN: The Ravens were concerned about Brown's weight.



Gary Horton/The War Room

Panthers follow Bucs in catching a defensive wave

They may not bully and intimidate opponents like Pittsburgh's Steel Curtain or thoroughly dominate foes like Buddy Ryan's 1985 Bears, but the Panthers feel the finishing touches they

recently put on their defense will be enough to put them in Super Bowl contention.

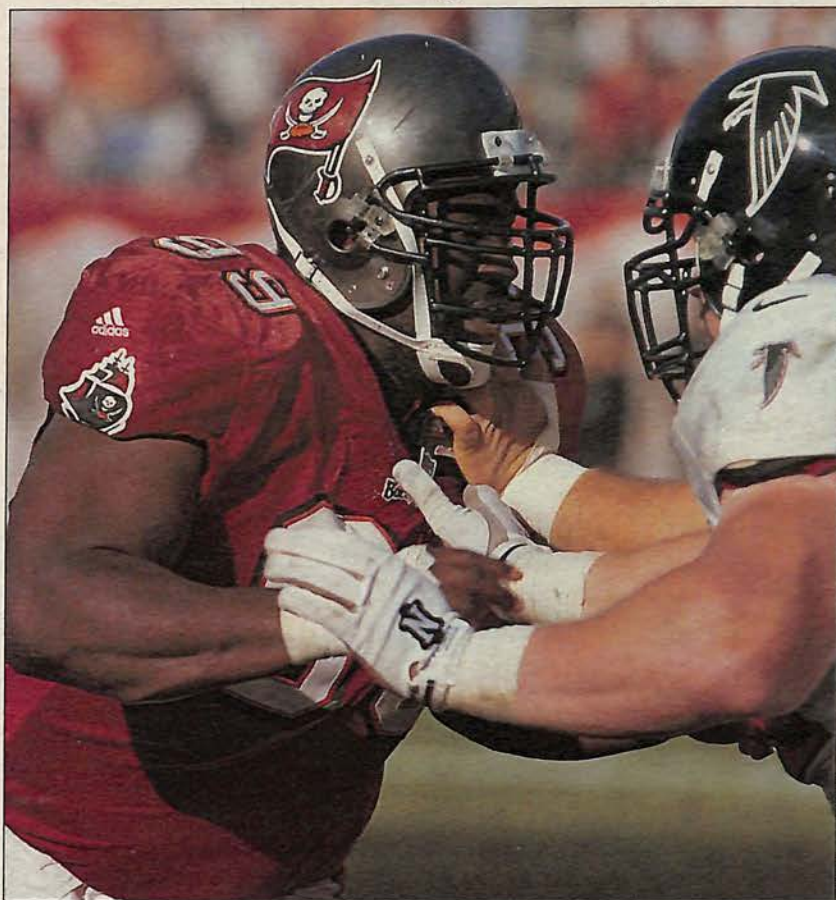
In the matter of just 48 hours, the Panthers added two defensive linemen who played in the Pro Bowl a combined six times from 1995 to 1998. By signing Reggie White, the NFL's all-time sacks leader, and Eric Swann, a dominant defender in his own right, Carolina now has the type of defensive line "wave" that has long been the foundation of many championship teams.

"Wave" is football-speak for a deep rotation of quality players at a particular position. Developing waves has been a virtual pipe dream for general managers since the inception of free agency, but the Panthers made it look easy by luring White out of retirement and effectively recruiting Swann, who had been released by the Cardinals for salary-cap purposes. Though these moves don't make the Panthers a lock for the playoffs, they give defensive coordinator John Marshall great flexibility in terms of schemes and personnel groupings.

Looking back on the great teams of the past decade, the two that repeated as Super Bowl champions, the 1992-93 Cowboys and 1997-98 Broncos, did so with seemingly endless line combinations on defense. It wasn't until the Cowboys borrowed Charles Haley and the Broncos rented Neil Smith that their defenses truly peaked. The same could happen to the Panthers.

To gain a better understanding of just how dangerous waves have become, look at the '99 Buccaneers. Although they already had Warren Sapp and Brad Culpepper, two top-notch defensive tackles, the Bucs spent their first-round draft pick on Anthony McFarland. While some scoffed at the move on draft day, coach Tony Dungy got the last laugh when his team rode a dominant defense all the way to the NFC championship game with little help from a sputtering offense.

The most important thing a wave does is keep a unit fresh, especially the inside players who take the most physical punishment. Asking a 350-pound defensive tackle to play all four quarters is like asking a heavyweight fighter to go all 15 rounds. Sure, it's possible, but there is no way the fighter will not be on his last legs at the final bell. Credit Tampa Bay's decision



RED STORM: Sapp is terrific, but even he gets tired. That's why having solid reserves is important.

makers for recognizing that the same principle applies on the football field.

Having a player with McFarland's ability to step in 10-15 snaps a game for Sapp and Culpepper allowed the Bucs' defense to dominate in the fourth quarter against worn-down offensive fronts. Last season, opponents scored just 55 points against Tampa in the fourth quarter—a microscopic 3.4 points per game. In addition, consistent heat up the middle often forced opponents to keep at least one running back in the backfield to secure the pocket. If a play was designed for the running back to be a dump-off option in the flat, then the quarterback was left without a safety valve. That is why the Bucs held quarterbacks to a league-low 52.7 completion percentage.

A less obvious byproduct of a platoon system is the positive effect it has on the middle linebacker. This season, with undersized (6-0, 242) Jamie Duncan replacing Hardy Nickerson in the middle, it will be imperative that Sapp & Co. keep offensive linemen engaged so that Duncan can search and flow instead of constantly having to thwart

off would-be blockers. If you don't think strong tackle play is vital to a linebacker's production, just ask the Dolphins' Zach Thomas where he would be without Daryl Gardener and Tim Bowens.

From a creativity standpoint, it's much easier to coach with four competent reserves than just one or two. That's just simple mathematics. What essentially becomes a "front eight" is much easier for a coach to manage than a "front four." With four able-bodied replacements on the bench, there is no reason to hold back and use conservative schemes. Tampa's attacking style of defense illustrates what can be done when fatigue and drop-off in skill level become non-issues.

No team in the league runs more twists and stunts up front than the Bucs. From a defensive coordinator's perspective, chaos often leads to confusion on offense. Not only do those tactics complicate blocking schemes, they also disguise the coverage schemes that are being played in the secondary. If a defense can divert a quarterback's primary focus from the secondary to the trenches, then part of the battle is already won, especially if there are deficiencies in the deep third of the field.

Aside from Donnie Abraham, the Bucs don't have a cornerback who matches up particularly well in man-to-man coverage. What they do have is a group of aggressive ballhawks who anticipate well. This is why the Bucs use predominantly zone coverage. It seems like a no-brainer, right? Wrong. Coordinator Monte Kiffin would never be able to use such a strategy if he weren't getting consistent pressure from his guys up front. As a rule, zone defenses only work well when teams aren't forced to blitz in order to generate a pass rush.

The Bucs get such tremendous pressure from their four linemen that they can feasibly drop seven men into coverage. Even a quarterback with a rocket arm such as Brett Favre has a hard time squeezing the ball in against that kind of padded coverage.

Whether Carolina can even approach the benchmark that Tampa Bay has set on the field, one thing is certain: The Panthers will be able to do many things up front to mask some suspect areas of their defense, such as an aging linebacker corps and inexperience at free safety. If they do pull off a miraculous Super Bowl run, they will have their wave to thank. **TSN**

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Baltimore



TOUGH BREAK: Starting WR **Patrick Johnson** is out for six weeks after he broke his right clavicle when he slammed to the ground untouched as he made a deep catch. It's hard to tell what kind of impact his absence will have on the team. A

third-year player, he was looking to have a breakout season after two years filled with flashes of brilliance and periods of injuries. With rookie **Travis Taylor**, Johnson's expected backup, still holding out, the team has made **Jermaine Lewis** Johnson's replacement. Thus far, Lewis has looked good and will be tough to move out of the starting lineup. ... Rookie RB **Jamal Lewis** will be sidelined four to six weeks after dislocating his right elbow last Friday in a scrimmage against the Redskins. Coach **Brian Billick** says Lewis should be back in time for the opening game. However, the missed time will slow his development. Lewis had been impressive in camp, showing the power and speed to get outside and the balance and ability to absorb shots.

SAM I AM: DT **Sam Adams** needs to get in better shape, but he has been dominant so far (just ask RG **Mike Flynn**). The Ravens don't need Adams in great shape, just enough to take about 30 snaps a game. One of the knocks on him in the past has been his conditioning. ... Starting DT **Tony Siragusa** continues to hold out, and it's unlikely the Ravens will try to persuade him to join the team. Even though Siragusa has played well the last two seasons, he has very little leverage. He is 33 and has had knee problems. **Lionel Dalton** has performed well in Siragusa's spot. —Mike Preston

Cleveland



KID LEGS: The starting lineup keeps getting younger and faster. Rookie TE **Aaron Shea** has replaced second-year pro **Mark Campbell**, and DT **Stalin Colinet**, in his fourth season, takes over for **Darius Holland** (sixth year). Colinet is faster than Holland, and Shea is faster than Campbell. Coach **Chris Palmer** has said all along one of his top priorities is improving team speed, and that is clear evidence of it. ... Starting RB **Errict Rhett** missed several

practices because of minor soreness in his knee, giving rookie RB **Travis Prentice** a chance to show what he can do. Prentice looked good and seems to be improving on his two weaknesses, blocking and pass catching. ... The team was thin at backup linebacker going into camp, and the situation has worsened with a pectoral injury to LB **Tony McCombs**. He got hurt after two days and will miss several weeks.

IRREPLACEABLE DAVE: C **Dave Wohlabaugh** was one of the few bright spots on the offensive line a year ago. He was consistent, meshing well with rookie QB **Tim Couch** and doing a nice job of calling out blocking assignments. It was just too bad his teammates couldn't block. At 6-3 and 292, Wohlabaugh isn't really that big by NFL center standards. He can't overpower defensive tackles or nose tackles. He has to finesse them, and he has the smarts to do that. His experience is a huge plus on a young, ever-changing line, and it is an even bigger plus for Couch. Wohlabaugh's presence gives him confidence that the pocket won't collapse up the middle. Now the Browns must build an offensive line around him. —Steve King

Indianapolis



TIME TO CATCH UP: A potentially damaging situation was averted when LB **Rob Morris** ended his holdout. He was the last of the team's seven draft picks to sign. Morris missed 12 days and 17 practices at training camp, but he is a smart, instinctive player who will get up to speed in a hurry. The Colts made him their starting middle linebacker when he was drafted, and every repetition is vital to his development. He'll be responsible for

recognizing offensive formations, properly aligning the defense and adjusting in a split second. ... The tight ends were frequent targets during early-camp passing drills. That certainly pleases **Ken Dilger** and **Marcus Pollard**, who combined for 74 receptions in '99. Don't be surprised if that total increases this year.

TIME TO STEP UP: Second-year DE **Brad Scioli** needs to be more of a factor this season, and he is giving every indication that will occur. Scioli primarily is working behind **Chad Bratzke** at right end, although he occasionally takes snaps on the left side. The coaches want a dependable backup behind Bratzke, who was forced to be on the field for virtually every snap in '99. ... WR **E.G. Green** has been something of a tease his first two years. When healthy, he has been an integral part of the offense. Green is an expert route runner, isn't afraid to work over the middle and can pick up yardage after the catch. Green still isn't fully recovered from a broken leg and is being limited to one practice per day. Ideally, Green or **Jerome Pathon** can start alongside **Marvin Harrison**. That would allow **Terrence Wilkins**, currently the No. 2 wide receiver, to be used as a third-down threat. —Mike Chappell

Buffalo



THIN AT QB: Backup QB **Doug Flutie** suffered a severe groin pull that will keep him out the rest of the preseason and possibly some of the regular season. Primary backup duties go to **Mike Cawley**, a free agent who was cut by the team in

training camp last year. **Phil Stambaugh**, a rookie free agent from Lehigh, becomes the third-stringer. Cawley has shown a good, accurate arm. Stambaugh is adjusting to the speed of the game, and is throwing the ball well and making good reads. Neither is ready to step in if something happens to starter **Rob Johnson**, who missed time last week because of the stomach flu. ... RB **Antowain Smith** shows no effects of the sprained toe that limited him late last season. He has been impressive in camp with his improvement as a receiver.

SWITCH IS ON: The team switched OLBs **Keith Newman** and **Sam Rogers**. Newman goes to the strong side, and Rogers moves to the weak side. Coach **Wade Phillips** says Rogers' abilities as a pass rusher will be magnified coming from the quarterback's blind side. Newman is an outstanding run-stopper, so putting him on the tight-end's side makes sense. He has practiced as a down lineman in some schemes. ... **Daryl Porter** was ahead of **Keion Carpenter** and rookie **Travares Tillman** in the battle at free safety, but Carpenter stood out in a scrimmage last Saturday. He intercepted a pass, tipped a pass that resulted in an interception and closed quickly to knock away another pass. ... RG **Joe Panos** has shown he has fully recovered from neck surgery by driving into everything that moves. —Allen Wilson

Cincinnati



IMPRESSIVE START: Rookie WR **Peter Warrick** has been dazzling. He's using his quickness to release off the line of scrimmage, snatching the ball on short and medium routes and leaving defenders behind. Warrick is showing toughness, too,

refusing to miss snaps because of a tender ankle. His comfort level has increased now that his Florida State teammate, WR **Ron Dugans**, has arrived in camp. Meanwhile, WR **Darnay Scott**, who has been slowed by Achilles' tendinitis, has looked tremendous on post routes when he has practiced. **Craig Yeast** has looked good in Scott's absence. ... At 6-3, QB **Akili Smith** is seeing the field well and showing off his rocket arm. Because of his vision and ability to thread the needle, look for him to resurrect use of the tight end. He needs more touch on his short passes, but he's throwing the post pattern with laserlike accuracy.

SMOOTH TRANSITION: Newcomers DE **Vaughn Booker** and DT **Tom Barndt** have stepped right in with DT **Oliver Gibson** and DE **John Copeland** and formed a veteran unit that's showing the ability to stop the run and pressure quarterbacks. DE **Reinard Wilson** has improved in every facet and is showing extreme quickness off the left side as a third-down pass rusher. ... Concern over C **Rich Braham**'s knee has led to LG **Mike Goff** taking more snaps at center. Goff, who is stronger and more mature than he was last year, is making a push for more time. He's due to start the season opener against Cleveland while **Matt O'Dwyer** serves a one-game suspension. —Chick Ludwig

Denver



WALLET WAR: Coach **Mike Shanahan** saw DT **Trevor Pryce** as the cornerstone of a rebuilt defense. Now there are fears Pryce won't even make the season opener because of his holdout. He wants to be not only the highest-paid Broncos defender but one of the highest-paid defensive tackles in the league. The Broncos have made a seven-year, \$31.5 million offer. But it's back-loaded and doesn't give Pryce the kind of signing bonus he wants. So Pryce is

waiting at home in Florida. His replacement is second-year player **Montae Reagor**. He was moved from end to tackle during the last minicamp and has bulked up from 260 pounds to 280, yet he has been able to maintain his quickness. That quickness, plus his football instincts, can make him a tough player for guards to handle at times. Still, Reagor is no Pryce. A good offensive lineman can handle Reagor one on one. Pryce often can be stopped only by a double-team.

POWER TO HEAL: Shanahan says RT **Matt Lepsis** is fast becoming better than **Harry Swayne**, who anchored the position in 1998 before leaving as a free agent. Lepsis, who rarely misses an assignment, beat out **Trey Teague** last year and has matured into an excellent pass blocker and an improved run blocker. Lepsis was a tight end at the University of Colorado, and his quick feet give him an advantage over a lot of other linemen. ... RB **Terrell Davis** says he thinks his rebuilt knee is completely healed and will ask Shanahan to give him at least six to eight carries in the first exhibition game Saturday at Arizona. —Patrick Saunders

Jacksonville



CASUALTIES: The team will be without RT **Leon Searcy**, who tore a tendon above his right knee, for at least three months. Searcy has had surgery and could be back by November. The team must decide whether to place him on IR, which would put him out for the season, or keep him active for the stretch. **Zach Wiegert** will move from right guard to right tackle in his place, with **Anthony Cesario** and **David Kempfert** battling for the starting right guard

job. Neither has played in an NFL game. With LT **Tony Boselli** sitting out the preseason recovering from a knee injury, the starting line has a paltry 74 starts combined. ... The team probably will have to do without S **Carnell Lake** for the rest of the preseason as he recovers from foot surgery. Conditioning won't be a problem because he's one of the best-conditioned players on the team, but the young secondary needs his leadership back there. **Rayna Stewart** is starting in his place, but he lacks the experience Lake can provide.

SHOW OF HANDS: An early bright spot has been WR **Alvis Whitted**, who has shown impressive hands. Whitted, who has track speed, has come up with big catches in camp and could factor in the rotation. He will battle **R. Jay Soward** and **Reggie Barlow** for playing time. If Whitted continues to progress, the team will have the speed it needs to help take the pressure off **Jimmy Smith**. ... The battle for the backup job at running back is close, with **Stacey Mack** and **Chris Howard** both looking impressive at times. Mack is a power runner; Howard has been the better receiver. —Pete Prisco

Kansas City



HE'S NOT DONE: Don't write off WR **Andre Rison** yet. Rison, 33, and coming off the worst season of his NFL career, is responding to the fight for his pro life. Rison spent several weeks at a fitness camp in Honduras in the offseason and lost about 15 pounds. He reported to camp at a well-sculpted 199, has regained the ability to get off the line of scrimmage and is catching passes like the Rison of old. ... QB **Todd Collins** continues to get more practice time than **Warren Moon** in the battle to back up **Elvis Grbac**. The Chiefs view Collins, 28, as a better alternative than Moon, 43, if Grbac is injured. ... The holdout of No. 1 pick **Sylvester Morris** has given WRs **Kevin Lockett** and **Larry Parker** more opportunities to solidify jobs behind Rison and **Derrick Alexander**. ... G **Dave Szott** is unable to participate in contact drills until he finishes the blood-thinning medication he's taking for an offseason blood clot. He hopes to play in the final two exhibitions.

MARVELOUS MARVCUS: MLB **Marvyn Patton** is a physical marvel. A quiet man who leads by example, he was voted by his teammates as MVP a year ago, when he participated in all 1,078 defensive snaps. Patton, 33, has not missed a game in his 10-year career. Patton's durability can be attributed to his indefatigable, year-round work regimen in the weight room. Though just 235, Patton is strong enough to take on 300-pound linemen and quick enough to chase down running backs. And he doesn't come out on passing downs. He is frequently sent after the quarterback on middle blitzes yet has the quickness to cover receivers out of the backfield. —Randy Covitz

New England



LINEMEN NEEDED: The offensive line was devastated by injuries the first two weeks of camp. Six players, all of whom were expected to compete for starting jobs, were sidelined by knee injuries. The problem was so bad the Pats were forced to cancel a controlled scrimmage against the Giants for what a team spokesman termed a "lack of depth." The injury list grew when OL **Grant Williams** and DL **Henry Thomas** each had arthroscopic knee surgery and OL **Max Lane** experienced fluid buildup in his right knee. Of the original six injured players, LT **Bruce Armstrong** is the closest to returning—within a week or so. Rookie **Adrian Klemm** has the furthest to go and may miss a large portion of the season.

LOOKING FOR MORE: WR **Terry Glenn** is as graceful and athletic as any receiver in the league. He is fast, has good hands and is dangerous in the open field. But Glenn isn't the most respected player among his teammates. He sometimes struggles getting off the line of scrimmage and is neutralized by double-teams. His off-field habits have been questioned, and his toughness has long been an issue. The Pats will need Glenn to get his head on straight this year. ... Free safety remains the most wide-open position, with veteran **Larry Whigham**, former first-round pick **Tebucky Jones** and 1999 starter **Chris Carter** alternating days with the top unit. Jones' size and speed may win out in the end, although a player to watch is hard-hitting '99 rookie **Tony George**. Whigham and Carter would appear to be long shots. —Michael Felger



HE'S BUFF: Rison is in top shape and catching everything.

Oakland



TAKING IT SLOW: LT **Matt Stinchcomb** could be the starter for the next decade. First, he has to survive camp. Stinchcomb, the '99 first-round pick who missed his rookie season because of torn ligaments in his left shoulder, stopped practicing last week when he felt a jolt of pain in the joint. An MRI was clean, but it did underscore the point that backup **Barry Sims** has to be ready to step in at any moment. ... With QBs **Rich Gannon** and **Bobby Hoyle** in place, the real battle is for the No. 3 job. **Rodney Peete** is beginning to settle in, and **Scott Dreisbach** appears much more comfortable with the offense in his second year. Dreisbach has good scrambling ability and a decent arm. ... DE **Lance Johnstone** finally added some bulk in the offseason—a goal the past four years—and reported at 265, 20 pounds heavier than his usual playing weight. He feels great and is as quick as ever, and the extra pounds will add pop to his tackles. But it's unclear whether the added weight will take the edge off his pass-rushing skills.

LINEBACKER HELP: LB **William Thomas**, formerly with the Eagles, joined the team last week and has been lining up on the weak side, where he can help bring along second-year player **Eric Barton**. Thomas can play on the strong side, too. The battle for that job is down to **Elijah Alexander** and **Travian Smith**. Alexander is more steady; Smith has more big-play potential. ... Although the team is determined not to assign a chaperone to K **Sebastian Janikowski**, it is rooming him with rookie P **Shane Lechler**, who has a clean-cut reputation. —Sam Farmer

Miami



CHIPS IN THE OLD BLOCKER: Coach **Dave Wannstedt** says LT **Richmond Webb**, who has bone chips in his elbow and has chosen to put off surgery until the end of the season, will miss the preseason opener against Pittsburgh and will be eased back into practice so he doesn't overdo it. Webb had this problem two years ago and elected to have the chips removed, which cost him two weeks. In Webb's place is **Willie Jones**, who spent 10 weeks with St. Louis last season. Jones (6-6, 370) certainly has the size, though he might be too big. The coaches would like him to get in the 350-360 range. ... Wannstedt says **John Bock** has been the best offensive lineman in camp. Bock, coming off knee surgery in '99, is getting time at right guard to supplant **Heath Irwin** or **Kevin Donnalley**, who has been moved to left guard to back up **Mark Dixon**.

BIG YEAR AHEAD? WR **Lamar Thomas**, who missed last season because of a shoulder injury, may be ready for a big year. He became a workout fiend in the offseason and added muscle tone to a too-thin frame. He'll never be confused with **Oronde Gadsden** in terms of size, but he is one of the best route runners on the team and can stretch defenses with his speed. Thomas' strength, however, is underneath and across the middle. He is fearless, and in the slot he can get away from bump-and-run coverage. ... DEs **Rich Owens** and **Jason Taylor** are experimenting with two-point stances in certain instances to use their speed. Taylor added weight in the offseason. Now the key is keeping it on, which would serve him well against bigger tackles. —Todd Archer

New York



STILL THE SAME: It doesn't appear the Jets will make any dramatic changes in their offensive scheme. The team will use multiple formations (yes, even four- and five-receiver alignments in certain situations) and employ several personnel packages. The manner in which the team uses everything will be dictated by personnel. The No. 1 goal, says new offensive coordinator **Dan Henning**, is to get the ball to RB **Curtis Martin**—like last year. If no one steps up as a reliable complement to WR **Wayne Chrebet**, Henning may be forced to use Martin a lot more than planned. That's why this is a critical preseason for **Dedric Ward** and rookie receivers **Laveranues Coles** and **Windrell Hayes**. If no one emerges, Henning may have to rethink his strategy. ... It looks like the three-way competition at free safety—**Omar Stoutmire**, **Kevin Williams** and **Scott Frost**—will go down to the wire. Stoutmire, the probable winner, and Williams, who plays in the nickel, are solid bets to make the team. Frost could be on the bubble.

FINDING HIS SPOT: Rookie CB **Tony Scott** hasn't gotten much attention in camp—understandable, considering the club's four first-round picks—but he appears to have won a roster spot. With **Ray Mickens** (hamstring) on the sideline, Scott has been working as the nickel back with the first-team defense ahead of **Otis Smith**. Scott, Smith, **Buddy Crutchfield** and **Del Lee** are battling for No. 4 cornerback. The club likes Scott because he can play the slot and outside. He also is supposed to be a good special teams player. —Rich Cimini

Pittsburgh



CALLING ALL CENTERS: The Steelers had to sign their second extra center in less than a week because they didn't have enough players in training camp who could snap the ball to their quarterbacks. The latest was **Greg Huntington**, who has played with three teams in five NFL seasons. Huntington spent his first couple of days at right guard because **Rich Tylski**, who was brought in to start there, was too busy filling in at center. The team's top backup centers—**Roger Duffy** (ankle) and **Tom Myslinski** (groin)—had not practiced in more than a week, and Pro Bowler **Dermontti Dawson** missed a couple of days because of a tight hamstring—the same one that caused him to miss nine games last season. The team signed **Ryan Thomassie**, a free agent from NFL Europe, when Duffy was injured.

ROOKIE ROUNDUP: One of the real surprises so far has been undrafted rookie G **Hank Fraley**, who played at Robert Morris. Fraley is a tough kid who uses his hands well, and coach **Bill Cowher** is impressed with the way he tries to grasp the offense. Fraley could win a spot on the team, particularly because the Steelers also will try him as a backup center. ... WR **Danny Farmer**, the team's fourth-round pick, has had problems catching the ball, something that did not plague him at UCLA. He dropped a pass thrown right at him in a night scrimmage and then dropped another in practice the next day. After each mistake, though, Farmer atoned. He got behind rookie CB **Hank Poteat** and caught a long touchdown pass in the scrimmage and the next day made a two-handed scoop of a low pass that almost hit the ground. —Gerry Dulac

San Diego



BAD NEWS FOR HILL: MLB Eric Hill's career may be in jeopardy. Hill suffered a neck stinger the first day of camp and felt pain all the way to his ankle. Doctors have found a bone spur on Hill's spinal column, and Hill is seeking another opinion.

If Hill, 34, is forced into retirement or is out for a long time, second-year player **Orlando Ruff** (6-3, 250) will be asked to step into the middle. An undrafted rookie in 1999, Ruff was impressive in spots and on special teams last season. Ruff is faster than Hill and is considered a better tackler, but he lacks Hill's experience. Ruff was bound to start sooner or later. It's beginning to appear that it will be sooner.

SORE SHOULDER: QB **Ryan Leaf** is experiencing soreness and stiffness in his right shoulder and has stopped throwing for now. He says it isn't anything serious, probably a product of trying to do too much too soon, but he also admits it's so tight he can't tuck his shirt in behind his back. Leaf had been throwing extremely well, and there's no doubt he's the most physically gifted quarterback in camp. ... Undrafted rookie **RB Ronney Jenkins** continues to break long runs in practice. If he doesn't make the team, something's wrong. ... One of the biggest surprises has been the progress of rookie OT **Damion McIntosh**, a third-rounder from Kansas State. The club had hoped McIntosh could help by next season. But he has made such great strides that the coaches now see him being a factor this season. Line coach **Joe Bugel** says McIntosh is one of the steals of the draft. —*Nick Canepa*

Seattle



LIMPING ALONG: The first week of camp can be summed up in one word: ouch. In three consecutive practices, the team lost three players—starting MLB **DeShone Myles**, who tore the ACL in his left knee; promising TE **Rufus French**,

who also tore the ACL in his left knee; and WR **Karsten Bailey**, who separated his left shoulder. Myles and French will miss the entire season, and Bailey is out four to six weeks. The loss of Myles is especially difficult because he had worked so hard to rehabilitate his surgically repaired right knee, a nagging injury that forced him to miss most of last season. ... The re-signing of WR **Sean Dawkins** bolsters what was becoming a very thin receiving corps. ... It is beginning to look unlikely that QB **Brock Huard** will challenge **Jon Kitna** for the starting job. Coach **Mike Holmgren** still plans to take a good look at Huard during preseason, but it most likely will be to help evaluate his long-term potential rather than provide him the opportunity to unseat Kitna.

B.M.O.C.: RG **Floyd Wedderburn** is a big man with big-time potential. No. Make that a huge man with enormous upside. But at 6-5, 333, he must improve on the little things to become a long-term answer. Moving Wedderburn, a former left tackle, inside has helped deal with the outside pass rush. But he still gets out of position and becomes brain-locked on occasion. At least at guard, even if he doesn't always do well, the defender still has to find a way to get around his wide body. —*Clare Farnsworth*

Tennessee



NEW WEAPON: Signing **Carl Pickens** will let the team make some adjustments in its passing game. Because Pickens always has played split end, the team will move **Kevin Dyson** to the strong side, where he should see more single coverage

because of Pickens' presence. **Yancey Thigpen**, slow to recover from offseason ankle surgery, becomes the third receiver and will operate out of the slot in three-wide sets. Even when Thigpen is cleared to play, it will be tough to argue that he should start ahead of Pickens or Dyson. ... The team is trying to incorporate the fade route into its red-zone offense. QB **Steve McNair** has spent a lot of time working on a pass he hasn't been asked to throw much as a pro.

SECONDARY CONCERN: CB **Donald Mitchell**, in line to be the nickel back and possibly a starter, will miss the season after tearing the ACL in his right knee. That pushes **Dainon Sidney** into the nickel spot and leaves the team scrambling to fill the dime. The team plans to sign a corner, but because the system is difficult to learn, any player brought in will need a few weeks before being able to contribute. In practices with the Rams last week, the team was down to three healthy corners. ... LB **Greg Favors** is pushing to start at one of the outside spots. He has made few mistakes and looked good against Rams RB **Marshall Faulk** in passing drills. Rookie **Keith Bulluck** must cut down mistakes in pass coverage to unseat Favors. ... Rookie LB **Frank Chamberlin** could excel on special teams. He is quick to the ball and delivers a quality blow. —*Jeff Legwold*

Arizona



EASY DOES IT: In a change from previous years, the team has backed off on the hitting in training camp. Way off. The Cardinals had seven days of practices before last Saturday's intrasquad scrimmage, and in those seven days there were only five workouts with pads in which regular contact (but little actual tackling) was allowed. Coach **Vince Tobin** says it was time to try something different after all the slow starts of recent years. The

players have raved about how fresh they feel, and Tobin has been impressed with almost every workout. ... Although it is somewhat difficult to tell just how well rookie **RB Thomas Jones** is doing given the lack of hitting, he has shown an amazing ability in drills to cut at the line and move forward. **Michael Pittman** remains the starter and has had a good camp. But many wonder how long that will be the case.

LESS PAIN: Third-year OT **Anthony Clement** (6-8, 355), whose career progress has been slowed by back problems, is healthy, or at least healthier. His back bothers him a little but not nearly as much as it did when a herniated disk took the strength from his left leg and prevented him from getting low for leverage. Now, Clement, who started 14 games last year, has bend in his legs again, and he has impressed coaches with his improvement. There is still a learning curve for Clement, but so far in camp he has clearly distinguished himself on the right side. Because he is able to explode off the ball again, he should be able to clear some room for the running game and offer more help in pass protection. —*Darren Urban*

Carolina



NO GRACE PERIOD: A season-ending injury (fractured hip) to rookie FS **Deon Grant** puts more pressure on first-round pick **Rashard Anderson**, who is still learning the position after playing cornerback in college. Although the coaches had ticketed Anderson as a starter, he probably would have split time with Grant early in the season. **Damien Richardson** will be Anderson's backup, but he's not a threat to challenge for the starting job.

There's no doubt Anderson has the skills to be a solid player. He is fine in coverage, and he's a physical player, but he needs to develop instincts as a center fielder. The staff will try to speed up the process by giving Anderson an abundance of playing time in the preseason. The team had entertained the idea of bringing in a veteran safety a few months ago, but salary-cap problems make that scenario unlikely now. ... Don't expect to see DLs **Reggie White** and **Eric Swann** until late in the preseason. Both are working to get into condition and won't begin practicing for several weeks.

GOING STRONG: Coming off a season in which he tied the record for touchdowns in a season (12) by a tight end, **Wesley Walls** is showing no signs of slowing down. Walls, a huge part of the offense, is not an exceptional blocker, but that's not a problem because the team almost never asks him to stay on the line of scrimmage on passing downs. He's one of the best red-zone and third-down receivers in the game, and he has an exceptional relationship with QB **Steve Beuerlein**. Walls is always in the right spot, providing a constant safety valve for Beuerlein. —*Pat Yasinskas*

Atlanta



BOOKER BOOKS: The strange saga of AWOL CB **Michael Booker** has ended—at least for now. After leaving camp for two days amid uncertainty over his future, Booker returned. Coach **Dan Reeves** welcomed him back, but there are no guarantees. Booker is fighting for a spot as a backup to starters **Ray Buchanan** and **Ashley Ambrose**. Only a fill-in starter in his career with the Falcons, Booker never has fulfilled the expectations attached to

the 11th overall pick of the 1997 draft. He is competing with **Eli Williams** and rookies **Anthony Midget** and **Darrick Vaughn** for playing time in the nickel defense. Williams likely will be the starter in the nickel alignment. ... Rookie strongside LB **Mark Simoneau** has been working behind **Henri Crockett** because he may have more opportunity for playing time there than behind weakside starter **Keith Brooking**. Simoneau is an intriguing prospect with the kind of motor coordinator **Rich Brooks** likes. Simoneau should be an instant impact player on special teams.

KERNEY'S READY: DE **Patrick Kerney** always has had the speed and pass-rushing skills to be an impact player. Now, he has added about 15 pounds of muscle and is carrying about 280 pounds on his 6-5 frame. Coaches are confident Kerney and DE **Brady Smith** will provide big plays as starters. Reeves' concern is the depth behind them. Kerney, a first-round pick in 1999, is a good bet to contend for the team lead in sacks. The added bulk should help Kerney, who felt undersized last season, when his weight ranged from 260 to 265. —*Charles Odum*

Chicago



KICKING CRISIS: The team spent a sixth-round pick on K **Paul Edinger** and traded another pick for P **Brent Bartholomew**. Still, the Bears didn't make it through a week of training camp before looking for alternatives. The punting has been below average by Bartholomew and **Aron Langley** but not as bad as the kicking, an area that lost games last season. Edinger and **Jaret Holmes** struggled to the point where the team signed **Michael Husted** and was in touch with former Bear **Jeff Jaeger** as alternatives. Look for the Bears to consider kickers through the preseason as they become available. ... The injuries to WRs **Marty Booker** and **Marcus Robinson** are hurting the timing of the offense. Their temporary absence means chances for others—namely **Dez White**—to work into the No. 1 offense, but the completion percentages have dipped, and quarterbacks have not been as sharp throwing to receivers not as familiar with them or the reads.

HERE'S THE RUNDOWN: The Bears used a sixth-round pick on RB **Frank Murphy**, a 4.2 burner from Kansas State. He has the best speed on the team and will go the distance if he gets to the edge with any kind of opening. But he has been too inconsistent. He came with the reputation of an occasional fumbler and has put the ball on the ground too much to suit coaches. If he can find some discipline and focus his speed, he'll challenge **James Allen** to share time with RB **Curtis Enis** but not until then. ... **Jerry Azumah** and **Terry Cousin** are the third and fourth cornerbacks. They're putting a squeeze on **R.W. McQuarters**, who is in a serious roster battle. —*John Mullin*

Dallas



TALE OF THE TACKLE: As he mulls retirement, RT **Erik Williams** has been working out regularly in case he opts to play. The team can't trade him because of the salary-cap implications. While Williams is out, **Solomon Page** moves from right guard to right tackle, and **Jorge Diaz** moves into the starting lineup at right guard. Diaz has been manhandled by **Alonzo Spellman** in practice, but the coaching staff is convinced that with help from center **Mark Stepnoski**, Diaz will be serviceable. ... RBs **Michael Wiley**, **Michael Black** and a host of others are fighting for one or two backup spots. The staff prefers Black because he's bigger, faster and makes sharper cuts. But Wiley may have an edge because he was a fifth-round pick who already has received a \$100,000 bonus.

ALL DAT: The team thinks MLB **Dat Nguyen** could be a star. At 5-11 and 230, he's not big, but he has a knack for reading plays, slipping through cracks and dragging down ballcarriers. But is he big enough to be the physical run defender the team needs in a division that includes **Stephen Davis** and **Duce Staley**? **Barron Wortham** and **Chris Bordano** have been acquired just in case. Bordano is better against the run than Wortham, but Wortham has more experience and savvy. —*Jean-Jacques Taylor*

Detroit



SIDELINE SAFETY: SS **Ron Rice** might be out for the rest of training camp because of a shoulder injury. Rice suffered a first-degree separation of his left shoulder July 23 when he tried to avoid a collision with WR **Johnnie Morton**. In the meantime, the team will leave **Kurt Schulz** at free safety and work out **Ryan Stewart** and rookie **Todd Franz** at the strong position. Stewart has made significant improvements during the last couple of seasons. He has good speed but needs to pick up the intensity. ... The good news on defense is CBs **Bryant Westbrook** and **Kevin Abrams** have had excellent starts. Abrams has shown steady improvement in his ability to run stride for stride with receivers, particularly in deep passing routes. That is something the club didn't get from its corners last year, when interference calls were common. As a whole, the secondary is playing long routes much better and more effectively than it did last season.

OFFENSIVE BONDING: Coach **Bobby Ross** is hailing C **Mike Compton** and LT **Ray Roberts** for their efforts to inject team unity and camaraderie among the offensive players. Those were missing commodities at times last season. The two veterans also accepted roles as tutors for rookies LG **Stockar McDougle** and RT **Aaron Gibson**. —*Bill Roose*

Green Bay



CATCHING ON AGAIN: WR **Antonio Freeman** seems to have the bounce back in his step. He is making some of the elusive moves and tough catches that often weren't evident a year ago. Though he is playing with a splint on the middle two fingers of his left hand, he hasn't had too many problems catching the ball. ... RT **Earl Dotson** will be sidelined at least through the first preseason game because of a sore back, leaving QB **Brett Favre's** front side protected by seventh-round pick **Mark Tauscher**. The disk Dotson had repaired in the offseason is not herniated, but the recurring soreness is a concern.

MANY HAPPY RETURNS? PR **Joey Jamison**, who appeared in danger of being released, now is hanging on to the ball. Jamison, a fifth-round pick, has good vision and excellent acceleration, but he will have to break open a number of returns in order to make the team. ... DE **John Thierry** hasn't disappointed the coaches. He has made a number of plays against the running game, which should ease some fears that he's too small to play the position. ... One of the big surprises in camp has been seventh-round RB **Rondell Mealey**. He has taken advantage of the absence of **Dorsey Levens** and provided hard-nosed running. Mealey has a knack for hitting the hole quickly and bouncing off defenders. He also is an excellent receiver. —*Tom Silverstein*

Minnesota



FIGHTING FOR POSITION: The most wide-open position is tight end. The top contenders for the spot are **Andrew Jordan** and **Carlester Crumpler**, who were backups to **Andrew Glover** last season. The early edge may go to Jordan. He is playing with a renewed enthusiasm and has not been taking any plays off in camp. Jordan says he's motivated by the Vikings' stars. If he keeps this work ethic, he will be on the field with the stars. Crumpler is keeping himself in the mix because of his blocking ability.

BUDDING STAR: FB **Jim Kleinsasser** didn't have the best rookie season. He fumbled twice in an early-season loss to Chicago, and both fumbles resulted in Bears touchdowns. But expect big things this year from Kleinsasser, who might be the difference maker in the offense. The staff expects Kleinsasser to be a short-yardage threat as a runner and receiver. He may occasionally line up at tight end, from which he converted last year. He will be the biggest fullback in the league. Add his 4.6 speed, and this guy is a major weapon. He must prove he can burst through the line on runs. ... There is no quarterback controversy. This is **Daunte Culpepper's** show. He has much work to do, but he looks up to the challenge. Backup **Bubby Brister** has dropped some snaps and hasn't shown good arm strength. —*Bill Williamson*

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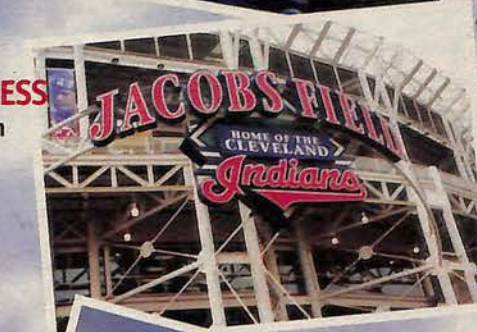
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New Orleans



SPEED DEMON: OLB **Mark Fields**, entering his sixth season, is healthy again after playing most of last year with a lower back problem, and the team expects a big season from him. He'll team with **Charlie Clemons** in the middle and **Keith Mitchell** and give the Saints one of the fastest linebacking corps in the league. Fields once ran down WR **Isaac Bruce** from behind and has been clocked as low as 4.4 in the 40. There aren't too many 6-2, 244-pounders who can move at that rate, which is why many scouts have been puzzled by his slow development. Fields plays best when his responsibilities are simplified. Defensive coordinator **Ron Zook** and coach **Jim Haslett** want to turn him loose on the weak side to chase down ballcarriers and make plays in the passing game. Fields can rush the passer or drop into coverage, but he sometimes misses his assignment and surrenders a big play. ... DE **Jared Tomich** is being tried at tackle to bolster depth there. The club is still interested in acquiring veteran run stopper **Gilbert Brown**.

SETBACK: RG **Chris Naeole** was playing the best football of his career—until he suffered a strained left knee two weeks ago. He is expected to be out two to four weeks. The Saints would like to get him back for the exhibition finale August 25 against Miami. Haslett says Naeole had graded higher than any lineman during camp. Naeole (6-3, 313) is a powerful run blocker. When he returns, he'll team with RT **Kyle Turley** and give the club a strong push on the right side. The line's play shouldn't drop off too much with veteran **Wally Williams** in Naeole's spot. —Jeff Duncan

Philadelphia



AN AIR ABOUT HIM: LT **Tra Thomas** (6-7, 340) spent his offseason working out in the thin air of Boulder, Colo., and it shows. Thomas, entering his third season, came into camp in the best shape of his career. His strength always

has been pass-blocking, and with a new, more defined look he should be even better. What Thomas has had to work on is his run-blocking. If he keeps his focus, he and **Jon Runyan** could become one of the league's best tackle tandems. Runyan has been out because of muscle spasms in his upper back. ... **Damon Moore** and **Rashard Cook** continue to battle for the strong safety spot. The staff likes Moore, but Cook makes more plays. A lack of speed is Cook's major drawback. The rest of the unit is set with CBs **Troy Vincent** and **Bobby Taylor**, AI **Harris** as the nickel and FS **Brian Dawkins**.

SIGNING IN: DT **Corey Simon** the No. 6 pick in the draft, agreed to a five-year deal last Friday. He is expected to make an immediate impact. Coordinator **Jim Johnson** says his biggest concern is the run defense, but he thinks Simon and bigger OLBs **Carlos Emmons** and **Barry Gardner** should make the team tougher against the run. The team finished 28th in the league last season against the run. ... **Todd Pinkston** has the size, speed and hands the team needed at wide receiver the past two years. He has showed he might have the toughness as well. It's tough for a rookie to step right into the West Coast offense, so Pinkston may begin the season as a backup. It's only a matter of time before he and rookie **Gari Scott** are the starters. —Mark Eckel

Tampa Bay



BACK TO THE FUTURE: The team is not concerned yet about the lower back pain that forced starting LT **Jason Odom** to skip two days of workouts. Team medical officials figured Odom would experience some back discomfort as a result of not having played football since last September. They just didn't think he'd experience the discomfort so soon. There's good news: The pain Odom experienced is not believed to be related to the back problems that resulted in his season-ending back surgery last year. There's also bad news: Odom missed some time deemed critical to his goal of growing accustomed to his new position, a new offense and the two new players he's playing alongside: LG **Randall McDaniel** and C **Jeff Christy**.

THE YOUNGBLOOD FACTOR: The young player who made the most progress in a year, according to coaches, is DT **Anthony McFarland**. He's using is feet and hands much better and has increased his speed and quickness. He's also discarded some moves that worked well in college but failed in the NFL. ... K **Martin Gramatica** has taken a different approach to his kickoffs this year. Instead of taking a six-step approach to the ball, he's now using a nine-step approach. Gramatica hopes the three extra steps will increase his speed and help him send kickoffs beyond the 5-yard line. ... The team would like to make use of second-year DE **John McLaughlin** in specific passing situations. McLaughlin has outstanding speed and burst off the snap, and he may get into five or six plays as a situational pass rusher if he stays healthy. —Roy Cummings

New York



DOWN GOES JONES: The Giants suffered their first major blow of camp when rookie LB **Dhani Jones** was lost for the season with a torn left ACL. Jones was part of what coach **Jim Fassel** has called the biggest upgrade on defense this offseason: the improved speed and depth among the linebackers. Jones' injury moved undrafted rookie **Jack Golden** up the depth chart. There is not a big drop-off from Jones to Golden, but both likely would have made the team and contributed heavily. ... The surprise pick in the draft, WR **Ron Dixon**, has so far shown that he belongs. He has a long way to go in learning formations and routes. But he can run and catch and also is emerging as the top kickoff returner. Dixon appears to have a good shot at the fourth wide-receiver role, ahead of **Brian Alford**, who has yet to show enough consistency.

QUESTION MARKS: RB **Ron Dayne** has impressed teammates with his cutting ability and vision, but some say he has to get into better shape to hold up under the heavy workload he is expected to carry. Dayne has been finishing last in the post-practice sprints among running backs and linebackers. ... LCB **Dave Thomas**, the biggest question mark in the secondary, has been beaten several times in practice, but Fassel says he is confident in Thomas over the long haul. On the right side, **Jason Sehorn** is running well and appears capable of returning to his 1997 form when he was a standout cover man. If Thomas is perceived as vulnerable, look for teams to avoid Sehorn and throw to the other side. —Neil Best

St. Louis



NEXT IN LINE: The resolution of QB **Kurt Warner's** contract (\$46.5 million over seven years) means the contracts of CB **Todd Lyght**, who remains out of camp, and DE **Kevin Carter**, who's in camp but wants a contract extension, are next on the agenda. The multiyear deal for Warner, who has looked sharp in practice so far, also means there is no way both Warner and backup QB **Trent Green** will remain on the roster after this season. ... Physically speaking, C **Steve Everitt** is ready to challenge **Andy McCollum** for the starting job. Everitt (6-5, 310) has a little more size than the resourceful McCollum (6-4, 295) and appears to have a little more strength. But it will take Everitt a few weeks, at least, to learn the nuances of the offense, the line calls and checks that a center has to make.

A SETBACK: Rookie RB **Trung Canidate** suffered a severely sprained ankle on what the team thought was a cheap shot from Titans CB **George McCullough** during scrimmages last week and could be out four to six weeks. Rookie OT **Kaulana Noa** suffered a dislocated left wrist and could miss three months. The loss of Noa hurts worse because the team has depth in the backfield, with RBs **Derek Loville** and **Justin Watson** waiting in the wings behind **Marshall Faulk**. But the Rams have next to nothing at tackle behind starters **Orlando Pace** and **Ryan Tucker**. ... The re-signing of LB **Lorenzo Styles** has added much-needed depth to the unit. He has excelled backing up MLB **London Fletcher**, filling holes in run support, and he can play outside. —Jim Thomas

San Francisco



READY TO GO: Rookie LB **Julian Peterson** could be the cornerstone of the team's rebuilding effort. A former end, he switched to outside linebacker last season at Michigan State and responded with 15 sacks. He also proved successful at covering tight ends, impressive for his size (6-3, 235). Peterson is confident in his ability to perform early and often and says he wishes he could play 100 snaps a game. With the worst pass defense in the NFL last season and the loss of veteran OLB **Lee Woodall**, Peterson will have a big load to carry as the top outside pass rusher. ... The team is excited about K **Wade Richey's** experience and savvy. In his third year, he makes the kicking game one of the team's few worries.

RATTAY IMPRESSIVE: Coach **Steve Mariucci** says keeping four quarterbacks is a long-shot, which is perplexing because **Tim Rattay**, a seventh-round pick, clearly has played better than third-rounder **Gio Carmazzi**. If both rookies make the team, it leaves veteran **Rick Mirer** on the outs, a scary thought for the young group. Mirer has not been given many snaps. **Jeff Garcia** is the starter. ... WR **Tai Streets** was one of the biggest steals of the 1999 draft, slipping to the sixth round because of an Achilles' injury. Now he's healthy and has coaches talking about making time for him even with **Jerry Rice**, **Terrell Owens** and **J.J. Stokes** in place. ... The running game will get plenty of work in the preseason as the team tries to control the ball and keep its thin defense from being overworked. FB **Fred Beasley** made the biggest offseason improvement. —Mike Triplett

Washington



TIGHT SPOT: **Irv Smith** was signed with the idea that he could give the team a two-tight end alignment that provided powerful blocking and a pass-catching threat that would divert attention from the receivers. But Smith decided he didn't want to play football. His departure should enable **James Jenkins** to keep his roster spot. Jenkins is not blessed with the best receiving skills, but he is a solid blocker who takes care of his assignments and provides firm, quiet leadership by example. Rookie TE **Zeron Flemister** has shown some ability in the passing game and bears watching through camp. ... DL **Nolan Harrison** sprained his knee and will be out about three weeks. Harrison's injury affords DE **Kenard Lang** more repetitions. Lang is running with the second team after starting as a rookie and for much of last season. With the instruction of new defensive line coach **Mike Trgovac**, Lang might be able to resurrect his career after a bad year.

GETTING BETTER: RB **Stephen Davis** is being worked into the offense gradually. He's taking more work in the team drills each day, and his ankle is holding up fine. He's still not 100 percent, but he's getting closer. ... WR **James Thrash**, after some rough moments in the first week, has redeemed himself with some of the toughest catches made in camp. He needs to transfer that from practice into the games. ... LB **LaVar Arrington** has shown exceptional skills as a pass rusher. He's still not in top shape and doesn't have a firm grasp on his assignments. He sometimes gets dominated by the blocking of tight ends and fullbacks. Still, it's easy to see his potential. —Paul Woody



Tom Dienhart

Insider

Henson's juggling act will hurt him again this fall

Here comes the bus carrying the Chattanooga Lookouts. It's 4½ hours before they will meet the Huntsville Stars. Except for a few concessionaires pushing carts through the concourse and an autograph

seeker, there's no one around as the players file off the bus and into the clubhouse at Joe W. Davis Municipal Stadium in Huntsville, Ala.

"Where's Drew Henson?" I ask.

"He's still on the bus," says a player, gesturing over his shoulder.

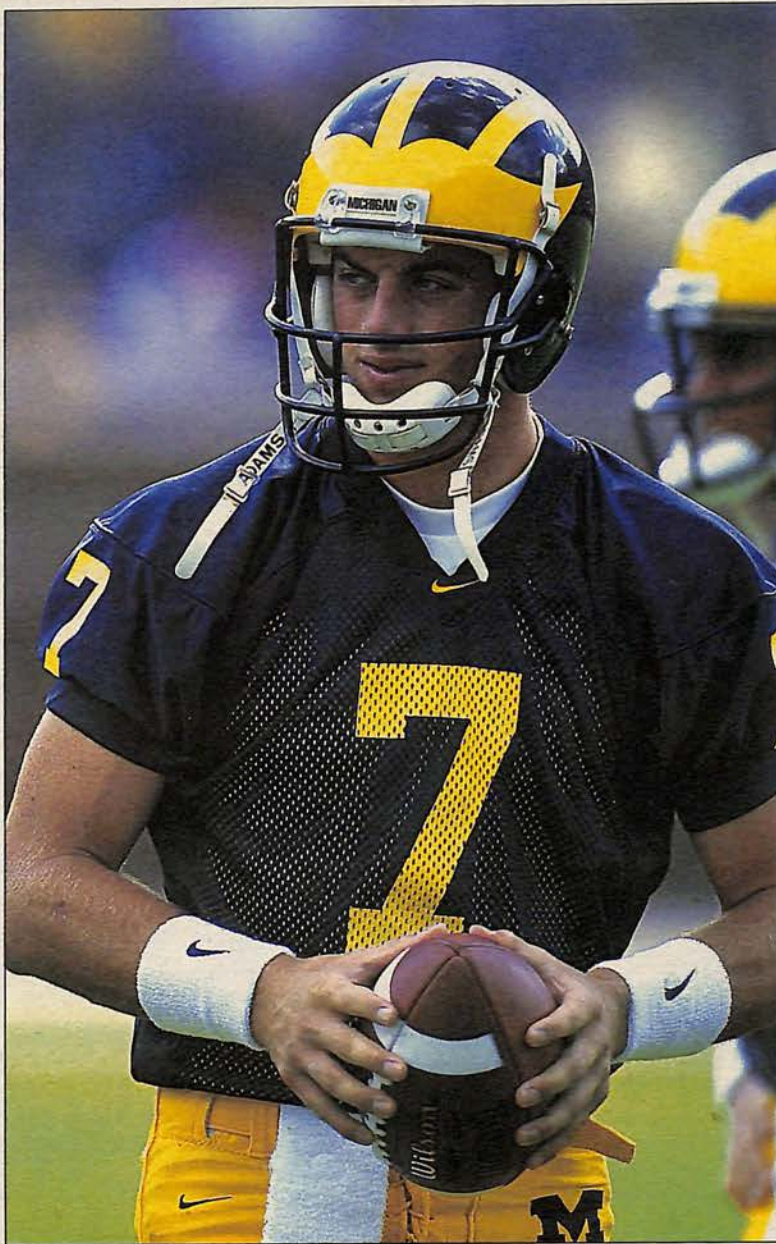
It's hard to see through the tinted windows. Finally, about a minute later, Henson emerges. He looks like a college student, not a minor league baseball player. He's wearing a Northern Arizona baseball cap backward as he flip-flops by in his thongs clutching a Dean Koontz book. He's on his way to work in the Class AA Southern League as the hottest prospect of the Cincinnati Reds, who recently acquired him from the Yankees' AA affiliate in Norwich, Conn., as part of the trade that sent Denny Neagle to New York.

Henson is talking into a super agent-sized cell phone as he approaches. It seems everyone wants to know if he can be all he can be in baseball and in football even though he isn't devoting himself full-time to either. The spotlight will glare brighter this fall because he will be the starting quarterback at Michigan after waiting two years to get his chance.

Others have tried to juggle the two sports, but none has excelled. Don't expect it to be different for Henson. Don't get me wrong—he'll do well this fall, but he won't be great. That will come only if he focuses on football.

Henson disagrees. Why? For his first 20-plus years, there has been nothing he couldn't do. You know the type. First he was king of kickball, then backyard Wiffle Ball champ, *Parade* All-American quarterback and high school baseball All-American. It's easy to see why Henson, who signed for \$2 million as a third-round pick of the Yankees in 1998, is confident in his abilities to do both. Youth isn't inhibited by experience.

In 69 games with Class A Tampa last season, Henson hit .280 with 13 homers and 37 RBIs. In 59 games this season with Norwich before the trade, he hit .287 with seven homers and 39 RBIs. However, he struck out 146 times and drew only 46 walks in 128 games over both stints. Still, his 6-4, 218-pound frame oozes promise and potential.



FINALLY GETTING HIS CHANCE: Forget the hype, it's time for Henson to step up and produce.

In his first two seasons at Michigan, Henson completed 66-of-135 passes (48.9 percent) for 779 yards with six touchdowns and three interceptions, but he was behind Tom Brady and never got a chance to see extended action. Many thought Henson would unseat Brady, a pedestrian sort who lacked Henson's resume and whose best trait was that he knew his limitations, for the starting duties last fall. It never happened. Michigan finished 10-2 and capped its season with an overtime victory over Alabama in the Orange Bowl.

That was the first sign that not concentrating on football hurt Henson. With his full attention on football, Henson presumably would have overcome Brady's edge in experience and won the starting job. Not being on campus to work out with teammates over the summer played a part in holding Henson back. But don't tell him that.

"I'm there all fall," Henson says. "I'm there for all winter conditioning, winter workouts, spring practice. The only time I miss is summer workouts, and the coaches aren't there anyway. The guys aren't getting any coaching. They're just working on their own. I know for a fact I haven't lost anything because of this."

Florida State quarterback Chris Weinke disagrees. Like Henson, Weinke was a big-time baseball and football prospect coming out of high school. He arrived at Florida State in August 1990 but stayed just a few days before signing a pro baseball contract. Instead of trying to balance both sports, he concentrated on baseball before giving it up and redirecting his focus to football as a 25-year-old in 1997.

"After being here at Florida State and knowing and understanding what I have to do to get ready for a season, I don't think I would be able to prepare the way I am now if I was playing baseball all summer," Weinke says. "I say that because I spend a lot of time being here (Tallahassee) around the guys. I think that's important. Watching film, being in the weight room with the other players. We get together and throw three or four nights a week starting six weeks prior to camp. All of that would be taken away from me if I were playing baseball."

"It may work for Drew. He's a superb athlete. But championship teams begin being built in the summer."

The poster boy for trying to have it all and coming up short is Doug Johnson. He tried to balance both sports his first two years at Florida before acquiescing to Steve Spurrier's wishes and concentrating on football in 1998. A shoulder injury (the result of excessive throwing from playing two sports) that required surgery also played a part in the decision. By then, it was too late. Johnson was plagued by inconsistency the past two years in

what was largely an unfulfilled career. There's no doubt the fact he played baseball caused him to struggle in football. Still, like Henson, no one was going to force his hand.

"The thing about football is, I can come out here and not practice for two months and be able to throw the football," Johnson said in the spring of 1998. "It's second nature for me." But by August 1999, he had changed his tune. "To be quarterback here is a full-time job," he said. "It's not something where you can go do something else



ALBERT DICKSON / TSN

SUMMER JOB: Henson says playing minor league baseball won't slow his progress during the fall.

and still be the guy. You can do that at a lot of other programs, but not here."

Michigan is one of those programs. TSN picks the Wolverines to finish second in the Big Ten behind Wisconsin. Though the Wolverines' defense must be tweaked after losing five starters, the offense is ready-made for success. The biggest question is at quarterback. Tell Henson that, and he flashes a quick look at you.

"I don't see any reason why our offense would come out flat unless there are injuries," he says. "We have three weeks of two-a-days. We'll get plenty of work in to where everything is perking. I'm going to get there 10 days before the start of practice (he plans to arrive this week), and I'll be throwing every day. So, it doesn't take me more than two or three days to get back into the groove."

Henson continues his sales pitch, telling you he spent most of his free time this summer whirling through videotape of Michigan's first four opponents. In his bedroom, with right thumb on the remote, Henson plays, rewinds, plays, pauses, rewinds and plays. Before his eyes dance images of Bowling Green, Rice, UCLA and Illinois.

Though viewing tape is good, it's no substitute for bonding and sweating with teammates in the Michigan summer sun. The oneness that is developed by exhorting a buddy to get one more rep on the bench press and the eye contact that a good pass-catch duo must develop can't be cultivated by a part-time partner.

"It was tough not throwing and working with my teammates (over the summer)," says Kenny Kelly, who

chose not to return for his junior season at Miami (Fla.) this fall so he could focus on his pro baseball career after balancing both for two years. "That's a time to develop chemistry. Not only am I not getting used to throwing with them, but they aren't getting used to catching my passes. Not watching film also hurt, but a player has to do what's in his heart. For me, it came down to an injury thing. I didn't want to take that risk in football."

For now, that's a risk Henson is willing to accept, but here's something he may want to ponder. If Henson has a big junior season and leads Michigan to a New Year's Day bowl, he should ditch baseball and spend his time working toward having a huge senior season. Heck, maybe he should consider declaring for the NFL draft if he ends up being the best quarterback named Drew in the Big Ten this fall.

"There are a lot of options, and that's one of them," Henson says. "A lot of things have to fall into place. I'd have to feel I've accomplished everything I can at Michigan to walk away. I love playing for Michigan. It would take a lot for me to walk away. It's a slim option, but it's one possibility."

"I don't know where I'll be (next year). That's a good question. The plan right now is to do the same thing I've done the last two. Report to baseball after school ends in April. Of course, things could change."

For Henson's sake, change would be good.

TSN

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CAMPUS RUMBLINGS AND LOCKER ROOM WHISPERS FROM TOM DIENHART

inside dish

Alabama coach **Mike DuBose** has a luxury most NFL teams don't possess: two good tight ends. **Terry Jones** and **Shawn Draper**, a former defensive tackle, will man the spot. They will allow DuBose to add a wrinkle to what already figures to be a potent offense. Look for Bama to run an "ace" formation that will feature two tight ends, one running back and two wideouts. Teams that like to zone blitz will be in trouble against the formation, which will feature lots of movement before the snap. The Tide thinks Jones' receiving skills will allow the offense to put pressure on safeties, who will be forced to defend deep against him. Jones also excels as a blocker. But the Tide isn't without offensive concerns: stud FB **Dustin McClintock** may be ineligible because of grade woes. That would be bad news with a new tailback being broken in. ... LSU and Arkansas still are sorting out quarterbacks. **Rohan Davey** started and won the last game of 1999 for LSU but hurt his knee in an offseason hoops game and missed spring drills. Still, Tigers coach **Nick Saban** won't hand the job to **Josh Booty**. Even **Craig Nall** may have a chance. The Hogs still haven't decided between **Gary Brashears** and **Robby Hampton**. Expect Arkansas coach **Houston Nutt** to play both early and let their performance decide who takes over as the starter. ... The indefinite suspension of QB **Ryan Kealy**, who faces DUI charges, is bad news for Arizona State. He could be back for the season, but the Sun Devils have just one other quarterback (senior **Griffin Goodman**) who played in 1999. The others are redshirt freshman **Jeff Krohn**, a former walk-on who shone in the spring, and sophomore **Matt Cooper**. True freshman **Andrew Walter** may have a chance to play if Kealy isn't reinstated. In a way, not having Kealy may be a good thing in the long run. He has undergone four operations on his right knee, so investing much in a fragile senior may not be wise. ASU cultivated Krohn in the spring in case Kealy went down again. It was a smart move. If Kealy can't play, the Sun Devils would depend on what should be a good ground game to carry them. ... Georgia made a wise move to dump short-yardage tailback duties from **Charles Grant**'s job description. Look for the standout sophomore to focus on playing defensive end after last season ended when he injured a knee running the ball against Georgia Tech. Grant's emergence at end would give the Bulldogs one of the best defensive lines in the nation. ... Miami (Fla.) got good news when **Jason Geathers** got into school. He's a great athlete who could help at quarterback, running back, receiver or defensive back. ... Notre Dame was expected to get contributions from true freshman DT **Greg Pauly**, but he may not play this year after injuring a knee in a high school all-star game. N.D. also will be without signees CB **Albert Poree** and OL **Neal Ambron**. Neither seemed to fit in. It sullies a bit what was a good signing class.



Mike DeCourcy

Bama recruit solidly defines today's soft commitment

Maurice Williams is better than most at making passes, not so adept at making declarations. In early June, this superb point guard prospect from Jackson, Miss., announced he would begin his college career in the fall of 2001 at Alabama.

He told the Crimson Tide coaches. He told the newspapers. He told the recruiting services.

And then he started telling folks he still might make recruiting visits to other colleges. Near the start of the July recruiting period, he demonstrated his devotion to the Alabama program by using phrases such as "The way it's looking right now" and "Right now, I'm really thinking about Alabama."

This is what has come to be known in the recruiting game as a "soft" commitment.

Basketball recruiting is an endeavor that truly does not need any more jargon. It has long since redefined the word "athlete"—displacing hand-eye coordination in favor of running and jumping ability—and spawned such other linguistic atrocities as "recruiting guru" and "rising senior." But if this soft-commitment business is going to exist, at least we have Williams to personify what the heck it is.

"I think I made a good decision until something else comes up," Williams says. "Right now, I'm pretty sure I made a good decision."

Spoken commitments are not binding, but generally a player who wants to claim a scholarship but still has trepidation about his decision will commit privately to coaches but make no public pronouncement.

Although the Alabama coaches have every reason to be skittish given that center Mario Austin committed to the Tide last year before signing with Mississippi State, they have to be pleased to enjoy even this level of assurance from Williams. He could be the last ingredient of a team capable of challenging for a spot in the Final Four. At the adidas ABCD Camp, Williams ranked third in assists, fourth in steals and made better than 41 percent of his 3-point shots while earning MVP honors in the all-star game.

At 6-1 and 180 pounds, Williams has the sort of body that needs only fine-tuning to be ready for the college game. He plays for a program at Murrah High that produced such NBA players as Othella Harrington and James Robinson and claimed last season's state championship. Talent scout Stephen Wacaser rates him the No. 3 point

guard prospect in the class of 2001 and, most telling, says Williams "understands the importance of leadership."

Those qualities make it hard for recruiters who don't wear Crimson Tide apparel to admit defeat, especially when they aren't discouraged from continuing their pursuit. Williams says he remains in contact with Texas, Mississippi State, Ole Miss and Missouri.

"Coaches still call. I listen to what they have to say," Williams says. "I really don't tell them to forget about it. I listen to the coaches, and you know how life goes sometimes. People have got to do what's best for them. If a situation comes up that I'll change my mind ... people change their minds."

With all of that, it remains most likely Williams will end up at Alabama. He was flattered the Tide employed so much energy recruiting him. "The whole staff recruited me," he says. "That made me feel really wanted."

The lead recruiter for Williams originally was Robert Scott, who died last spring after a battle with cancer. The two became close while Scott's illness progressed. Williams has spoken

with Scott's wife, Cynthia, on visits to Tuscaloosa.

"She said Robert always talked about me," Williams says. "The day he got out of the hospital, I had a game. She said he jumped in his clothes, and it was like 'Where are you going?' And he said, 'I've got to see Mo play. I'm going to Jackson to see Mo.' That made me feel good, that he'd have thought that much of me."

Johnny Jones took over the Williams case. He has had tougher jobs, most notably at Memphis, where he became interim head coach just before last season as the result of Tic Price's scandal-induced resignation and led the Tigers to six wins in their final seven games. But this still is work.

"You never know what's going to happen between now and signing day," Williams says.

That's one more skill he has mastered: changing directions quickly.

TSN

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OPTIONS OPEN: Maurice Williams isn't closing any college doors before the signing period.

JOHN DUNN FOR TSN

CAMPUS RUMBLINGS AND LOCKER ROOM WHISPERS FROM MIKE DECOURCY

inside dish

While colleges were out looking for prospects for the 2001 recruiting class, some lost players they signed for 2000. Rutgers will be without top-100 prospects G **Eddie Starks** and 6-9 F **Herve Lamizana**, although both are expected to enroll. Wing **Lou Wright** fell short of qualifying at Memphis. Marquette will not have SG **Dwyane Wade**. Florida is appealing the case for wing **Orien Greene**. If the appeal is unsuccessful, he will be a partial qualifier and can practice with the team and receive a scholarship. ... Indiana C **George Leach**, who is suing the NCAA over being ruled ineligible to compete as a freshman last season, will get the chance to polish his skills with an NIT all-star team that tours Europe on August 13-25. ... Florida SG **Teddy Dupay** is ahead of schedule in his recovery from surgery on a torn rotator cuff in his left shoulder. He is preparing for the Gators' trip August 10-21 to France. Wing **LaDarius Halton**, who missed the Gators' Final Four season because of right knee surgery, appears to have recovered his explosive athletic ability. ... Duke PG **Jason Williams** emerged as a star for the USA Basketball team that took second at the qualifying tournament for the World Championship for Young Men in Brazil. The U.S. team lost the title game to Argentina after beating the same squad in pool play. But Williams had plenty of help from Michigan State wing **Jason Richardson**, who indicated he could contend for Big Ten player of the year by averaging 15.6 points and hitting 47.4 percent beyond the arc in five games. One disappointment was Illinois big man **Brian Cook**, who started each game but averaged less than three shots. ... C **Muhammed Lasege** was passed by the NCAA academic clearinghouse. In order to play this season for Louisville, he needs to find out whether his experience playing in Russia damaged his amateur standing. An answer is expected in mid-August. Lasege, at 6-11, likely would start for the Cardinals.

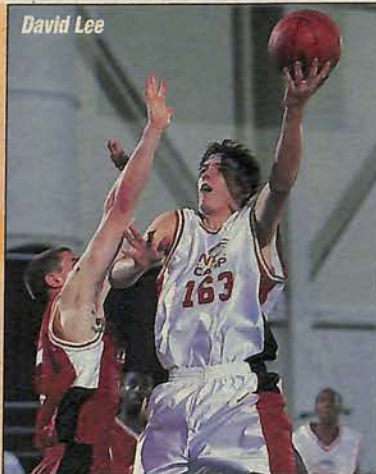
Inside the 2001-02 freshman class

TOP 20
overall

Just think back to the 1984 NBA draft, when two big men were drafted before a guard named Michael Jordan. This year's recruiting class is much the same, with big men Tyson Chandler and Eddy Curry attracting most of the attention now, but wing Kelvin Torbert (from that basketball factory known as Flint, Mich.) is just waiting to burst onto the national scene.

Recruiting analyst Stephen Wacaser, who publishes the scouting service *Assists, Turnovers and Loose Balls*, caps our recruiting analysis by ranking the top overall upcoming senior prospects and providing some top summer highlights.

David Lee



BOB LEVERONE/TSN

PLAYER, POSITION	HT./WT.	HIGH SCHOOL	JULY HIGHLIGHTS
1. EDDY CURRY, C	6-10/283	South Holland, Ill./Thornwood	Proved more physical than Cisse, Brown Similar to Shaq in desire to own paint on offensive end, but he's a good free-throw shooter. Catches anything.
2. TYSON CHANDLER, C	7-1/222	Compton, Calif./Dominguez	Inspired and effective at Peach Jam Can play outside. Probably NBA-bound. But there's room for improvement with his back to the basket.
3. KELVIN TORBERT, SG	6-4/196	Flint, Mich./Northwestern	34 pt/8 reb/6 assist effort at ABCD Very unselfish offensively—to a fault. Best defender among guards. Very mature. Clearly the best in the class.
4. OUSMANE CISSE, PF/C	6-8/223	Montgomery, Ala./Sidney Lanier	Terrific head to head vs. Chandler Capable of triple-double each outing. Has attention of head coaches (Louisville, Georgia Tech) every game.
5. DAJUAN WAGNER, PG/SG	6-2/183	Camden, N.J./Camden	At Nike had back-to-back 30-plus games Best offensive talent in the class. Unstoppable off dribble-drive. Attacks basket with force. Once scored 81 pts.
6. KWAME BROWN, PF/C	6-11/226	Brunswick, Ga./Glynn Academy	At Peach Jam recorded quadruple-double Billy Donovan is getting a point forward, much like Danny Manning. Has chance to be special.
7. RICK RICKERT, PF/C	6-11/211	Duluth, Minn./East	Dominating at ABCD Has ability to score inside with either hand. Effective 3-point threat. High energy.
8. DESAGANA DIOP, C	7-0/235	Mouth of Wilson, Va./Oak Hill	Showed strong physical presence at Nike Impressive at Nike because of court demeanor. Averaged 10.1 ppg, 9.2 rpg for powerful Oak Hill.
9. JULIUS HODGE, SG/SF	6-4/167	Bronx, N.Y./St. Raymond	Led Ravens to Big Time finals Not the outside shooter Reggie Miller is but similar in many other aspects, such as getting his shot in traffic.
10. MAURICE WILLIAMS, PG	6-1/180	Jackson, Miss./Murrah	MVP of ABCD All-Star game A complete point, comfortable distributing the ball, shooting or defending. Orally committed to Alabama.
11. JONATHAN HARGETT, PG	5-11/175	Durham, N.C./Emanuel Full Gospel	MVP of Big Time tourney May be No. 1 in class when ranking pure talent. Serious skills and explosion to the basket.
12. JOSH CHILDRESS, SF/SG	6-6/187	Lakewood, Calif./Mayfair	No. 1 small forward at Nike camp Mature individual. Works well without ball. Arizona, Kansas, Stanford want him.
13. DAVID HARRISON, C	6-11/230	Brentwood, Tenn./Academy	Held own vs. Chandler at Peach Jam Has no-nonsense work ethic on the block. Father is an assistant at Vandy and former NFL defensive lineman.
14. AARON MILES, PG	6-1/165	Portland, Ore./Jefferson	No. 1 point at Nike camp Reminds many of Maurice Cheeks. Intelligent, athletic. UCLA, Arizona, Kansas, Duke are battling for him.
15. CARLOS HURT, PG/SG	6-2/177	Louisville, Ky./Moore	41-point outburst at AAU showcase Lead guard likes to score and is unstoppable when given space. Lefty has deep shooting range.
16. DAVID LEE, PF/C/SF	6-8/224	St. Louis/Chaminade	Most prestigious head coach entourage Freewheeling player loves to dunk in traffic. Effective on break. Distributes well. May be Florida-bound.
17. JACKIE MANUEL, SG/SF	6-5/190	W. Palm Beach, Fla./Newman	Dominant at ABCD camp Smooth lefty with terrific skills. Added strength is his anticipation of plays. Headed to North Carolina.
18. T.J. FORD, PG	5-10/160	Sugar Land, Texas/Willowridge	Showed 3 speeds: quick, quicker quickest Left head coaches speechless with uncanny knack for separating from defenses and dishing.
19. WAYNE SIMIEN, PF	6-8/227	Leavenworth, Kan./Leavenworth	Two 28-pt. games at AAUs His game is so focused. He's a punishing player who's comfortable within himself. Has committed to Kansas.
20. JAWAD WILLIAMS, SF	6-7/196	Lakewood, Ohio/St. Edwards	Summer cut short due to coach's injury Big-time talent will skyrocket when he decides to become consistent. Played with passion, purpose at Nike.

For more top 25 senior prospects, go to sportingnews.com.

CAMPUS RUMBLINGS AND LOCKER ROOM WHISPERS FROM LUCIANA CHAVEZ

recruiting
dish

The Louisville staff was everywhere this summer, and it has paid off. In addition to snagging PG **Carlos Hurt**, word is the Cardinals are still high on the lists of PF **Ousmane Cisse**, PF **Brandon Bender**, wing **Alan Anderson**, PF **Terry Licorish**—a fast-rising senior after solid outings at the Peach Jam and Nike camp—and PF/C **Harvey Thomas**. Thomas could turn out to be the steal in that group. At 6-8, recruiting gurus love Thomas' ability to do it all and liken him to SuperSonics F **Rashard Lewis**, except Thomas is quicker. ... Louisville coach **Denny Crum** was getting the skinny on two seventh-graders from Houston during one of his appearances in Orlando. Asked whether he would be around to try recruiting them, Crum, 63, said, "Oh, yes." ... PF/wing **Jordan Cornette** and PG **Chris Thomas** had committed orally to Notre Dame before coach **Matt Doherty** left the school to take the coaching job at North Carolina. The future teammates were posing for pictures together in between games at the AAU nationals. Notre Dame coach **Mike Brey** did some legwork in Orlando to provide some reassurances to Thomas and Cornette. Thomas, who likely will start as a freshman, already has been won over, and Cornette sounds willing to give Brey a chance. ... One notably absent player from the Nike All-American and ABCD camps was wing **Marcellus Sommerville**. The lack of exposure could have hurt him except Sommerville, a product of the Peoria, Ill., basketball hotbed, earned his top-100 status with a great AAU national tournament playing for Illinois Gold. He was the reason Illinois Gold was able to advance into the quarterfinals even with the nation's best player, C **Eddy Curry**, nursing a sprained ankle. ... Wing **J.J. Redick** lived up to his considerable reputation with one shot in the semifinals of the AAU nationals. Redick nailed the money shot—a long 3-pointer with less than 2 seconds left—and it lifted his Boo Williams Summer League team into the final. Redick is easily the best pure shooter in the Class of 2002. Duke and Virginia are already hot for him.

Summer TOP 10 surprises

A couple of bad showings at the July camps and tournaments can send a player's reputation tumbling. Conversely, a strong stretch can send the opinions of a player skyward. Recruiting analyst Stephen Wacaser lists 10 players who have helped themselves the most this past month (listed alphabetically) and offers a list of honorable mentions.

PLAYER, POSITION	HT./WT.	HIGH SCHOOL	JULY HIGHLIGHTS
ALAN ANDERSON, 2G/SF	6-5/208	Minneapolis/DeLaSalle	All-America at AAU 17-and-unders Probably nation's No. 1 perimeter defender. Helped lead North to gold medal in USA developmental festival.
WIL BYNUM, PG/SG	5-9/157	Chicago/Crane Tech	Averaged 27.7 ppg at Peach Jam Rock-solid lead guard is a scorer first. High energy but needs to improve 3-point shot. Iowa State, Miss. St., Illinois in pursuit.
DRAKE DIENER, SG	6-3/183	Fon Du Lac, Wis./Goodrich	Solidified Playground Warriors' backcourt Consistently impressed coaches with uncanny knack for making crucial 3s at any at any time.
TRAVIS DIENER, PG/SG	6-0/162	Fon Du Lac, Wis./Goodrich	MVP at Nike Bluegrass, Peach Jam Is a definite high-major prospect. Helped cousin Drake Diener and Warriors to Nike Bluegrass and Peach Jam championships.
BARRY ELDER, SG/SF	6-3/194	Madison, Ga./Morgan County	Led Atlanta Celtics to TOC and Big Time titles Quietly contributes in every area. A "we" (not "I") player. Exceptional mid-range shooter.
WINSOME FRAZIER, SF/SG	6-5/183	Miami/Northwestern	Outplayed players with bigger reps at Peach Jam Effective in the open court and a capable halfcourt player. Able to play at a high level because he can adjust his game.
ROBERT LITTLE, C	6-9/245	Fairfax, Va./Paul VI	Big guy has made major strides in every area What a success story. He has made terrific improvement in the last three months, drawing interest from ACC and Big East teams.
MATT McCOLLUM, SG	6-3/170	Mount Zion, Ill./Mount Zion	Drained 10-foot game-winner at Peach Jam Prep teammates Neil Plank, Jake Sams were getting attention. After Peach Jam, Missouri, Utah, Saint Louis, others are calling.
CHRIS McRAE, SG/SF	6-4/197	Bronx, N.Y./St. Raymond	Stunning play at Big Time tourney Lost in shadow of prep mate Julius Hodge, but McRae is tough, hardnosed and skilled at ballhandling, shooting, defending and scoring in traffic.
DIJON THOMPSON, SF/SG	6-6/193	Redondo Beach, Calif./Union	Proved he's the most versatile in the class in terms of position Comfortable playing either wing spot or the point. Has exceptional feel for the game that enables teammates to flourish. Pac-10 teams are watching.



Bynum

BOB LEVERONE / TSN

HONORABLE MENTIONS

CHEY CHRISTIE, SF	6-5/188	Biloxi, Miss./Biloxi
CHUCK HAYES, PF/SF	6-6/221	Modesto, Calif./Christian
CHRIS HILL, PG/SG	6-2/180	Indianapolis/Lawrence North
DOMMANIC INGERSO, SG/SF	6-3/184	Santa Barbara, Calif./Santa Barbara
DUANE JOHN, SG/SF	6-4/177	Toronto/Boyle
MARCO KILLINGSWORTH, PF/C	6-8/220	Durham, N.C./Emmanuel Full Gospel
DWAYNE MITCHELL, SG	6-3/173	New Orleans/Kennedy
ERIC OSMONDSON, SG	6-4/184	San Diego/St. Augustine
ANDRE PATTERSON, SF	6-7/198	Los Angeles/Washington Prep
DONALD PERRY, PG	6-0/156	Tallahatchee, La./Reuben McCall
JUEL WIGGINS, PG/SG	6-3/185	Fitchburg, Mass./Notre Dame Prep

For July's daily recruiting reports, go to sportingnews.com.

Forecast for November is stellar at these schools

The list of schools off to the best start in collecting talent from the 2001-02 freshman classes includes the usual suspects—Arizona, Florida, North Carolina—but some fresh faces, and even some forgotten teams, are there, too.

An alphabetical look at the schools that have the best jump on the upcoming seniors, who can begin signing letters of intent in November:

- **ARIZONA.** Big man Channing Frye, a 6-11 post player from Phoenix, has committed orally, and Lute Olson is in the thick of things with top-25 talents Josh Childress, Aaron Miles and Rick Rickert.
- **FLORIDA.** Billy Donovan lost Jackie

Manuel to North Carolina and new coach Matt Doherty. But he's hoping to get David Lee to join Kwame Brown in heading south. The Gators also are involved with DeSagana Diop and Rickert.

■ **LOUISVILLE.** Point guard Carlos Hurt brings excitement to the backcourt. Ousmane Cisse, whose brother signed last year, is the major target now, and attracting local product Brandon Bender also is possible.

■ **MEMPHIS.** He's back. Immediately upon returning to the college ranks, John Calipari secured oral commitments from Dajuan Wagner and Anthony Rice. His focus is now on hometown shooting guard Earnest Shelton and man-child Eddy Curry (who still has an eye toward the NBA).

■ **MISSOURI.** Quin Snyder beefed up a thin front line with Benton Harbor, Mich., prep teammates Robert Whaley and Jeff Ferguson.

He's also trying to keep Lee in his home state and attract Matt McCollum and Duane John from Canada.

■ **NORTH CAROLINA.** Less than a week into the job and Doherty landed Jackie Manuel. Now he's trying to persuade fellow forward James White to join Manuel and the Tar Heels.

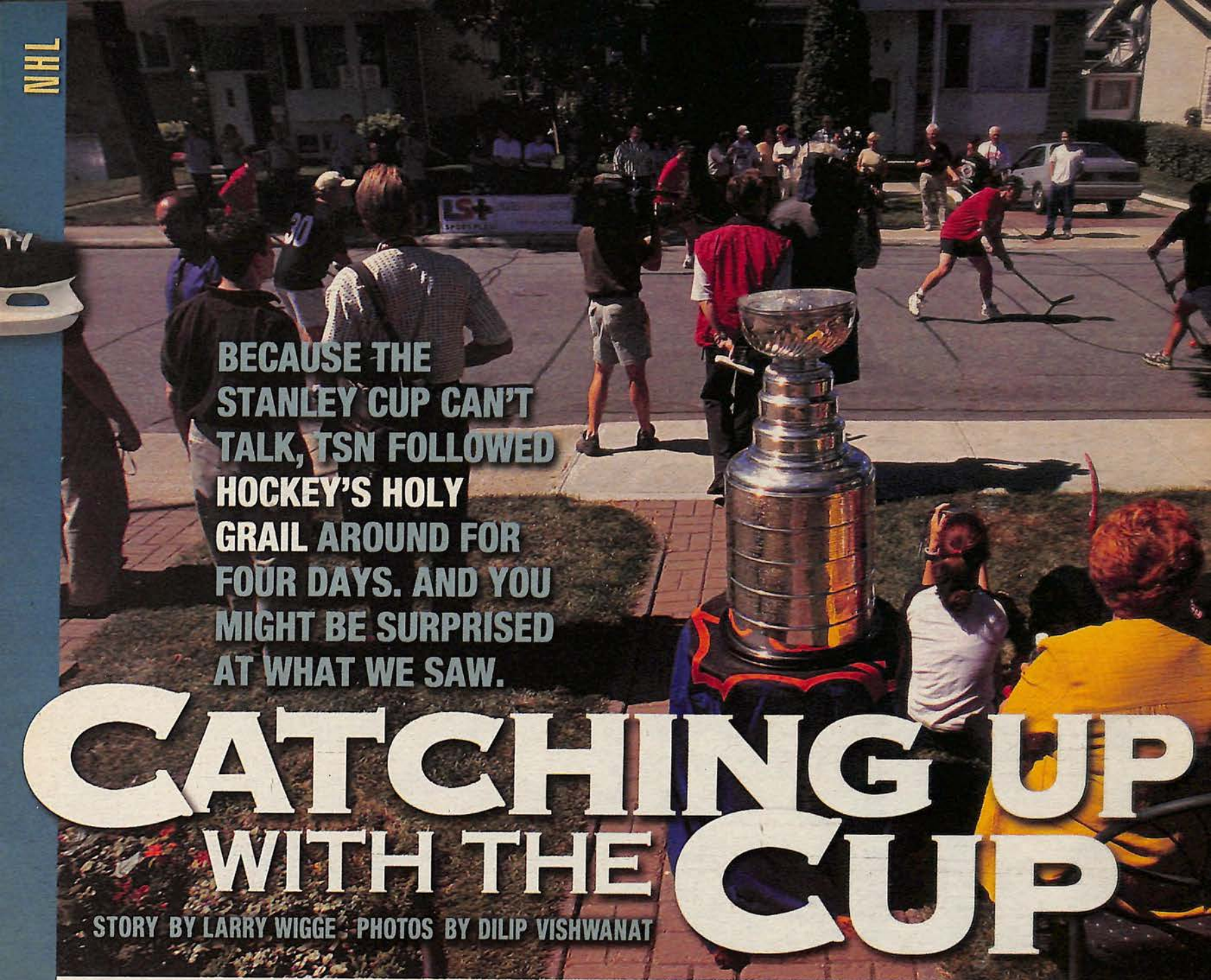
■ **NOTRE DAME.** Mike Brey is blessed. He got the coaching job he has been waiting for. Troy Murphy opted to remain in college. And Doherty left him with two key early commitments—Chris Thomas and Jordan Cornette.

■ **OHIO STATE.** Jim O'Brien and assistants Paul Biancardi and Dave Spiller already have three standouts in point Brandon Fuss-Cheatham, small forward Matt Sylvester and power forward/center Terrance Dials, who has tremendous potential. —Stephen Wacaser

WON OVER: Louisville looks good to Carlos Hurt.



BOB LEVERONE / TSN



**BECAUSE THE
STANLEY CUP CAN'T
TALK, TSN FOLLOWED
HOCKEY'S HOLY
GRAIL AROUND FOR
FOUR DAYS. AND YOU
MIGHT BE SURPRISED
AT WHAT WE SAW.**

CATCHING UP WITH THE CUP

STORY BY LARRY WIGGE PHOTOS BY DILIP VISHWANAT

For a few mind-numbing moments, the quiet, tree-lined street of 1950s-era bungalows brought to life a scene from a Hollywood movie.

Remember Josh Baskin, the 12-year-old character played by Tom Hanks in *Big*? In this real-life scene, there are no quantum leaps from kid to toy-company executive. But there are 30-year-olds who are returning to the carefree days of their childhood.

The boys who played ball hockey, baseball and hide-and-seek up and down this quaint street in St. Leonard, north of Montreal, are still young at heart, even if they huff and puff harder than they once did.

As Devils goaltender Martin Brodeur and his boyhood friends take to the streets for a little ball hockey, the similarity to the movie is uncanny. And if you listen closely, you can almost hear the voice of Mrs. Baskin calling Josh for lunch. Well, the local version, anyway.

"I felt the same thing this morning—and I've lived here most of my life," says 33-year-old Yvan Hebert, who grew up in the house beside Denis Brodeur Sr. and his wife, Mireille. "I can still hear

Mrs. Martin down the street yelling, 'Denis, Robert, Guy! It's time to eat.' The same for Denis and Martin Brodeur.

"And I'll never forget that young Marty would go inside and eat, and he'd be back out on the street in about 12 seconds. He couldn't get enough hockey then, and he hasn't changed to this day."

It's an NHL tradition that each member of the winning team gets to keep the Stanley Cup for one or two days. Brodeur took it back to his old neighborhood and put the Cup up for grabs in a friendly little street hockey game that more than 150 fans watched from in front of the house where he grew up.

Brodeur was in goal for every minute as New Jersey won the Cup for real in six games over Dallas in June.

The boys from Mauriac Street often pretended they were playing for the Stanley Cup when they were growing up. It's funny what dreams come true. Late in June, they really got a chance to play for the Cup.

"I'm 2-0 playing for the Stanley Cup on the ice in the NHL, but 0-1 on the streets of Mon-

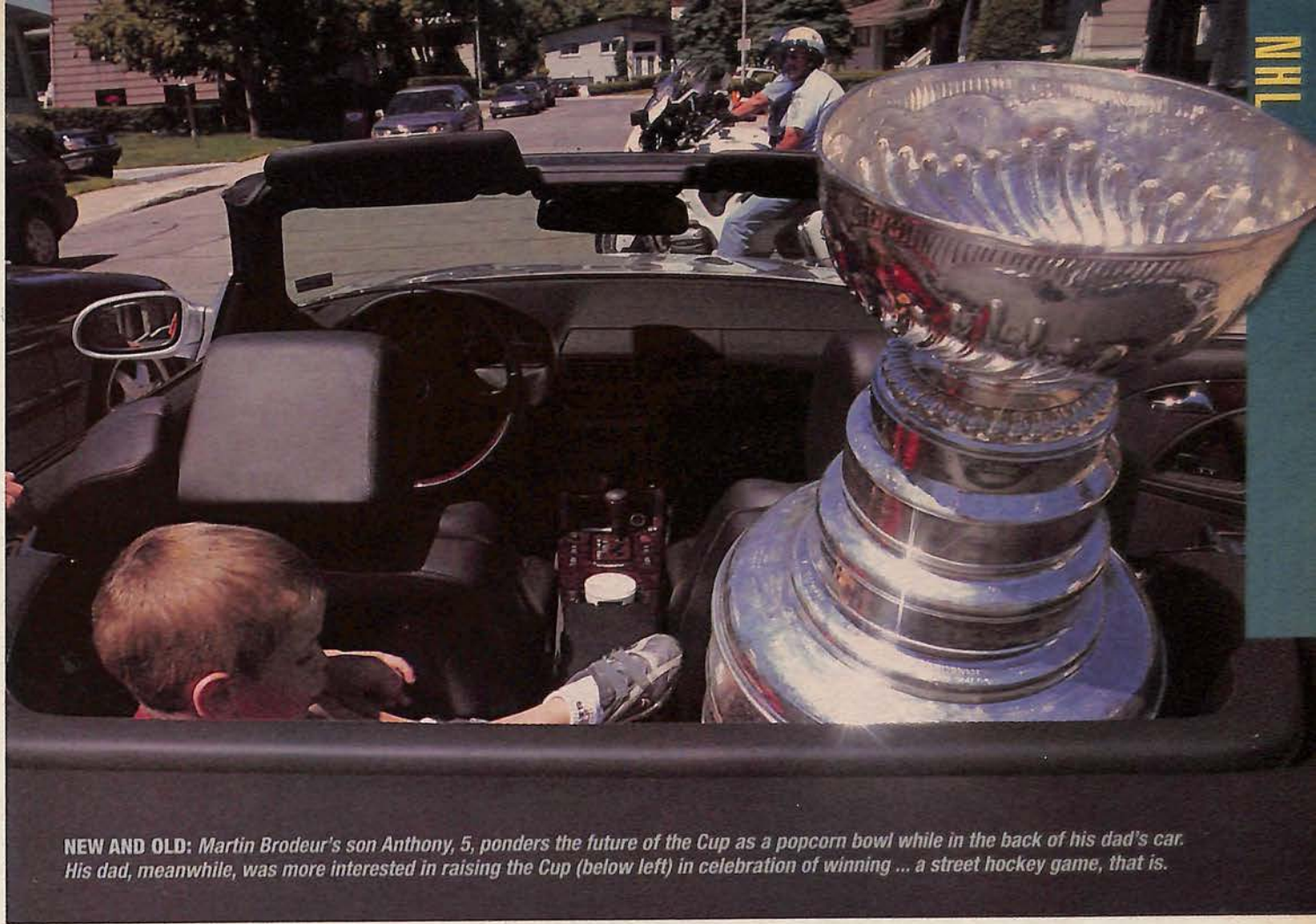
treau," Brodeur complains, referring to a similar 4-on-4 ball hockey game in 1995 with this same crew. "We want revenge. They beat us; beat us bad. Nothing short of a victory is acceptable this time."

Neighbors Philip Roy and Claude Romeo paired off with Martin and Denis Brodeur Jr. Hebert's team included the three Martin brothers. The teams were drawn up the way they've always been—players on the Brodeurs' team lived on the right of the street light in front of their house. Opponents were from the left of the light. That's always been the line of scrimmage for these rivals.

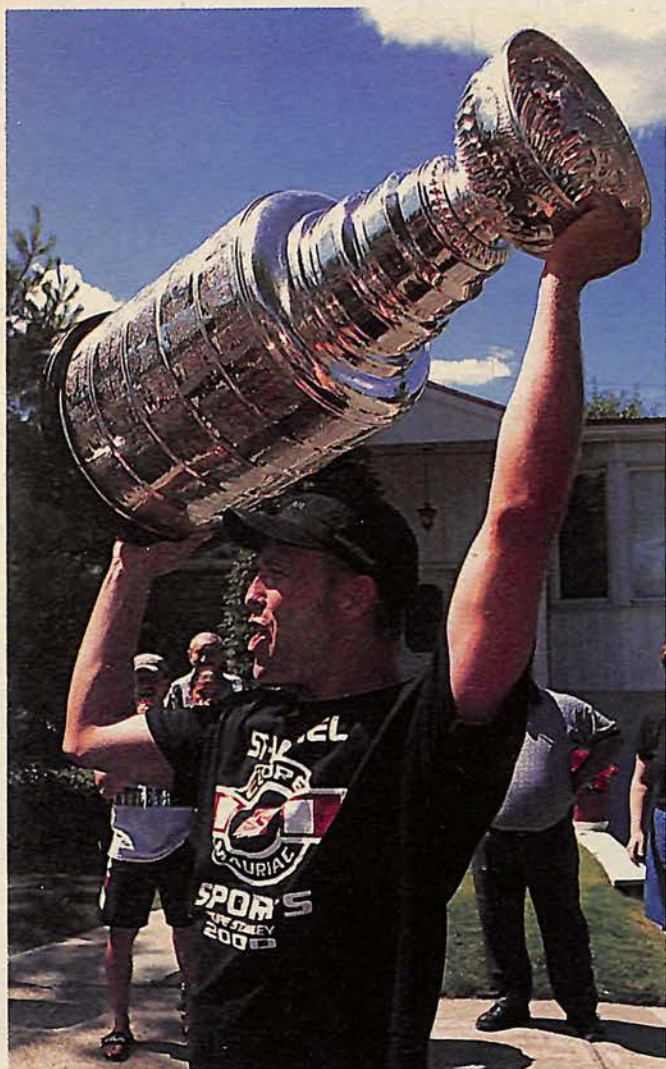
In the days when Brodeur only dreamed of a career in the NHL, police often would break up the street hockey games because they were blocking traffic. On this day, however, officers were only too happy to divert cars and watch the action.

The referee blew the whistle for the opening faceoff—and the trash-talking began.

"It sure is nice of your brother to bring the Cup back for us to win again," Denis Martin tells Denis Brodeur Jr.



NEW AND OLD: Martin Brodeur's son Anthony, 5, ponders the future of the Cup as a popcorn bowl while in the back of his dad's car. His dad, meanwhile, was more interested in raising the Cup (below left) in celebration of winning ... a street hockey game, that is.



"We'll see about that," Brodeur replies.

For a little more than an hour, these eight men dive after loose balls and muscle their way around and through opponents like they are 12 again. All the while, the prize, the Stanley Cup, stands on a table in front of the Brodeurs' home, a Devils flag flying proudly from it in the early-morning breeze.

After Denis Brodeur Jr. scores to make it 4-2 in the third game, Martin Brodeur yells to Mike Bolt, one of two keepers of the Cup from the Hockey Hall of Fame, "Get your white gloves ready, Mike!" (Bolt and Paul Oak, the other Cup keeper, have three pairs of white gloves with them at all times. They wear the gloves whenever they handle the Cup.)

Less than two minutes later, Martin Brodeur, playing defense—"In ball hockey, I let Claude learn how it feels to have pucks fly past his head."—completes a 3-on-2 break with a goal from the left side of the crease for the winner.

"Now," he says with his trademark smile, "I know how Jason Arnott felt when he scored the Cup-clincher for the Devils."

It's Brodeur's fourth goal of the day and third in the final game. Brodeur's team wins 5-3, 5-1 and 5-2.

Bolt carries the Cup to the center of the street, raising the shining prize to the sounds of *We Are the Champions*. Romeo shouts, "The Cup is back where it belongs."

Martin and Denis Brodeur Jr. take turns hoisting the Cup with as much excitement as the Devils did a few weeks earlier. But Roy shakes his head when the Cup is offered to him.

Why would anyone refuse to touch the Stanley Cup? Well, that's one of the juicy tidbits that are part of the lore of sports' oldest team trophy.

Roy, you see, still plays hockey—he just finished his senior year at Clarkson College—and he hopes one day to raise Lord Stanley's prize for real. Roy, a defenseman, is negotiating with six teams for his first pro contract.

"I nearly touched it in '95," Roy admits. "But Marty took me aside and said maybe I would rather wait. He said I would appreciate touching it more if I ever got a chance to win the Stanley Cup. He was right."

History is filled with scrumptious morsels like that. This is the only trophy that championship team members get to take home as a part of their reward.

It's during those travels—the Cup travels from 80,000 to 100,000 miles per year—that the trophy has been lost, dented, floated in a river, drowned in a canal, taken to strip clubs, restaurants, cemeteries, golf courses—virtually everywhere—over the more than 100 years that it has been awarded for hockey supremacy.

The 35-inch, 34½-pound prize has character that the NFL's Vince Lombardi Trophy, MLB's Commissioner's Trophy and the NBA's Larry O'Brien Trophy can't come close to.

Wherever it goes, youngsters and oldsters alike flock to the Cup, pose for pictures, hug it, kiss it, sit their toddlers in it. Being around this trophy, you quickly learn that the Stanley Cup is never just half-filled with all the excitement that goes on around it.



COULD THAT BE...: A roller-hockey team stops for a look as the hall of fame's Paul Oak transports the Cup.

The Stanley Cup began this year's tour July 14 in Anchorage. It was on display in the town square where more than 8,000 fans gathered.

"They led the Stanley Cup into town on a dog sled," Oak says. "And, in order to make sure everyone could see it, they raised it 200 feet on a fireman's ladder."

And to honor Scott Gomez for bringing the Cup home with him, the Native Americans blanket-tossed him in the air and caught him several times, a rite reserved for special occasions.

For Bolt and Oak, guarding the Stanley Cup is a 24-hour-a-day job. Oak says he went 33 hours straight without sleep from the time he stepped on the ground in Alaska until he got on the plane again, bound for Michigan. "To me, it's more important than if I was guarding the Hope Diamond," Oak says.

There were no such baby-sitters for the Stanley Cup until 1994. That's when the Rangers became champions and returned it with some new dents.

Before it spent the day in Montreal with Brodeur, the Cup went to Michigan, where Randy McKay

and Brian Rafalski had it, and to Montreal, where Scott Brule had his day. Among other places, the Cup also will make trips this summer to Russia, the Czech Republic and parts of New Jersey.

McKay didn't plan any elaborate celebrations. He just hung out with Stanley.

"We were sitting on his deck," Bolt remembers, "and it seemed like every few minutes he would stop and say, 'I still can't believe it. That's the Stanley Cup right there.'"

Even though Brodeur doesn't play for his hometown club, Canadiens fans have had 24 chances to see championship parades through the years, thanks to Montreal's unparalleled NHL success.

And though Brodeur is an enemy of sorts with his Devils during the season, he'll always be a local hero to most Montreal fans, especially in suburban St. Leonard, where the local arena will be renamed the Martin Brodeur Arena on September 2.

Seeing Brodeur roll up Mauriac in a silver Mercedes convertible, his wife, Melanie, in the front seat and Anthony, 5, and twins, Jeremy and William, 3, with the Cup in the back—a couple of bags of Dunkin' Donuts inside the Cup—is another classic memory of this famed trophy.

After posing for photographs with the Cup, Anthony tries to lift it but fails to get it off the ground more than 6 inches. "Daddy, help," Anthony shouts—and Brodeur helps lift the nearly 3-foot Stanley Cup over the head of his nearly 3-foot son.

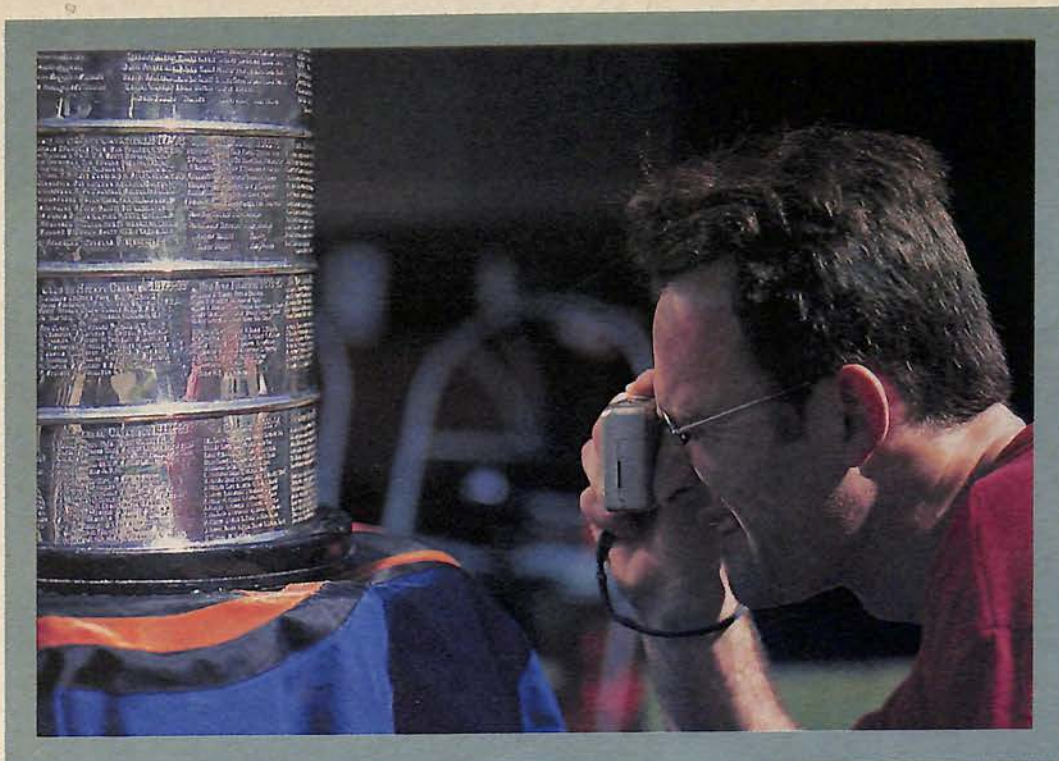
The second day Brodeur had it, there were more photo shoots. More interviews. More travels throughout Montreal in his convertible.

One surprise he had in mind, however, was when he took it to a movie theater and saw *The Kid* as the Brodeur family ate popcorn out of the Cup.

"That's some of the best popcorn I ever tasted," says Denis Brodeur Sr. with a laugh. Brodeur's

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS STANLEY?

1. **TORONTO**, Hockey Hall of Fame
2. **ANCHORAGE** with Scott Gomez, July 14-15
3. **MICHIGAN** with Randy McKay and Brian Rafalski, July 16-18
4. **MONTREAL** with Steve Brule and Martin Brodeur, July 19-21
5. **KITCHENER, ONTARIO**, with Scott Stevens, July 22-23
6. **CZECH REPUBLIC** with Patrick Elias and Petr Sykora, July 26-27
7. **WASAGA BEACH, ONTARIO**, with Jason Arnott, July 29-30
8. **LONG ISLAND** with Vladimir Malakhov and Sergei Nemchinov, Aug. 1-2
9. **NEW JERSEY** with Bobby Holik, Aug. 4
* TBD with Scott Niedermayer, Ken Sutton, Steve Kelly, Brad Bombardir, Aug. 5-10
10. **TORONTO** with John Madden, Aug. 11
11. **METCALFE, ONTARIO**, with Larry Robinson, Aug. 12
12. **BURLINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS**, with Jay Pandolfo, Aug. 16
13. **ALTON, NEW HAMPSHIRE**, with Bob Carpenter, Aug. 17
14. **NORANDA, QUEBEC**, with Ron Caron, Aug. 19-20
* TBD with Alexander Mogilny, maybe **RUSSIA**, Aug. 21-29
15. **WEST ORANGE, N.J.**, with Sergei Brylin and Chris Terreri, Aug. 30-31
16. **TORONTO**, back to the Hockey Hall of Fame



SAY CHEESE: Yvan Hebert gets a close-up of next-door neighbor Martin Brodeur's name on the Stanley Cup.

father has been involved in championship celebrations as the team photographer of the Canadiens for three decades. "I guess you could say popcorn always tastes better out of the Stanley Cup."

When Devils captain Scott Stevens, who won the Conn Smythe Trophy as the most valuable player in the playoffs, arrives at the Kitchener Auditorium, there's a line winding all the way around the side of the 50-year-old complex 64 miles southwest of Toronto.

A neighbor shouts over to the parking lot at the auditorium, wondering what was going on. "It's Scott Stevens and the Stanley Cup," a man yells back. The neighbor just shrugs. But later in the day, he was in line to get his picture taken with the Cup.

Wherever the Cup goes, there's excitement. When the Devils won in 1995, Stevens regretted not having a chance to take it back home.

"I only got one day with the Cup and could only bring it to our cottage at Lake Catchacoma," Stevens says, referring to his summer spot 150 miles northeast of Toronto. "This time I made sure we brought it back here."

The line of Cup worshippers seemed endless.

A team of hockey players from Sweden had their picture taken with the Cup. Walter Gretzky, Wayne's father, had a 16-and-under team in Kitchener for a tournament, and he came over to congratulate Scott and his parents, Larry and Mary. A young girl from Australia, who was visiting a pen pal in Toronto and read about Stevens and the Cup, also came to see hockey history.

"We don't have hockey in Australia," Shawna Collins says, "but we get NHL games on TV. And I've always wanted to meet Scott Stevens."

Florence Henry, 85, the great-aunt of Stevens' wife, Donna, reaches up from her wheelchair and touches the Cup at center ice of the Kitchener Auditorium. Her smile is captivating.

Henry cannot talk. But she scribbles her words on a notepad, "I've never seen the Stanley Cup up close. Now I know why those players play so hard to win it. It's beautiful."

"These eyes have never seen anything like it."

The muscles in Stevens' arms looked like Popeye's. He poses with Donna and his children, Kaitlin, 10, Ryan, 9, and Kara, 4, the puffy white clouds of Southern Ontario as a backdrop.

When he addressed the group of close to 3,000 well-wishers in the arena that afternoon, Stevens remembered his days with the Kitchener Rangers junior team, his days as a top draft choice with the Capitals, one great year in St. Louis and

two Cup championships in New Jersey.

"I remember I wasn't too happy when I went to New Jersey because I thought great things were going to happen in St. Louis," Stevens says. "But Donna said, 'There's usually a good reason for everything. Maybe better things will happen in New Jersey.' Boy, was she right about that."

Long-time Kitchener trainer Les Bradley came out to see Stevens. "Scott was a pain in the ass when it came to fitting him for skates," Bradley says, laughing. "In the one year he played for the Rangers, I think he tried four different brands—and then went back to the pair he started with."

"I always knew he'd play in the NHL. But I never thought he'd bring the Stanley Cup back here."

Later in the day, Stevens takes the Cup to the Galt Country Club, where family and close friends touch it. A few golfers even stopped putting to come over and touch Stanley.

In the three years that Oak has spent with the Hall of Fame, he says the Devils appear to be the most respectful of the Stanley Cup.

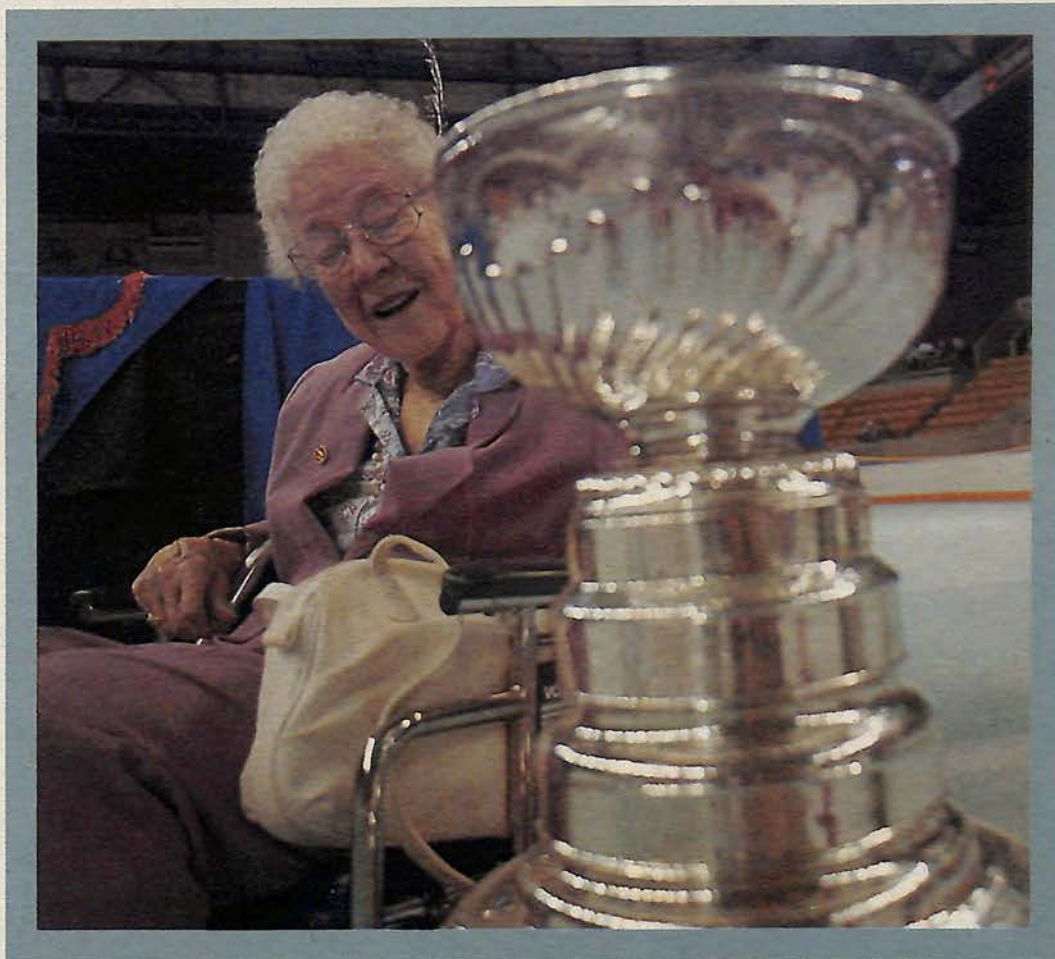
"Scott reminds me a lot of Steve Yzerman," Oak says, referring to the Red Wings' captain. "He's like a mother hen watching over the Cup. He knows the history and tradition—and how much hard work goes into winning the Cup."

"I think that's why he makes sure no one abuses the privilege of having the Cup."

On these four days in July, when most hockey players are thinking about what they have to do to get better, Brodeur and Stevens and the rest of the Devils are wondering if it can get any better. They know how much work it takes to win the Stanley Cup—and, without exception, each of them will tell you he'd do it all over again.

TSN

Senior writer Larry Wigge covers hockey for THE SPORTING NEWS.



A STERLING MOMENT: Florence Henry, a great-aunt of Scott Stevens' wife, spends some time with the Cup.

this week online

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How's this for a cool breeze in August: TSN's NHL Support Group continues its daily skate across frozen ponds for puckheads who can't get enough hockey. This week's focus is on the Atlantic Division, and you'll find out about **Mark Messier** and the Rangers, plus all their big rivals. Go to sportingnews.com/nhl/support/ — it's a bigger hit than a Scott Stevens bodycheck.



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Larry Wigge

Insider

The Blackhawks owe their fans an apology, but not from Smith

For a moment last week, Mike Smith, the new director of player personnel for the Blackhawks, must have thought he was back in Winnipeg the way fans were attacking him at a town hall meeting. Chicago

fans have a right to be angry. But not with Smith.

Rich Sims is 35 and a lifetime diehard Blackhawks fan. For proof, according to a Canadian Press story, he has the team's logo tattooed on his chest. "This is the only organization," Sims said, "that has slapped fans in the face consistently and gotten away with it."

But Smith took Step 1, having the guts to face 547 irate fans at this meeting. Don't underestimate how tough that can be after years of mistreatment by Bill Wirtz's ownership group.

Smith went ballistic, though, when fan Paul Jendrycki implied the team has done nothing this offseason.

"For the first time," Smith said in the Canadian Press account, "this team will have a pro scouting department, and I guarantee you it will be the best scouting department in the league. We had to steal it (assistant general manager Nick Beverley and director of pro scouting Joe Yannetti) from Toronto, but when I was in Toronto, we turned that team around in one year, going from a non-playoff team to the final four."

But Smith missed out on signing free-agent right winger Dallas Drake from Phoenix, among others. And when a team has missed the playoffs for three years, fans don't understand patience. They want things fixed now.



EASY TARGET: Smith's town hall meeting drew a large crowd that turned into an irate gathering of fans.

"We're supposed to stand up here and dance and tell you we're going to win the Stanley Cup in 2004?" Smith said. "I'm not going to do that because that's nothing but bull. We're trying to build an organization."

Hiring Alpo Suhonen as coach isn't what fans wanted to hear. But, remember, Smith knows Suhonen and respects his ability as a motivator.

Expecting Smith to undo decades of bad scouting is unfair. In a few years fans will see first-round Russian forwards Mikhail Yakubov and Pavel Vorobiev.

In the meantime, you can always count on Tony Amonte to flash his speed. Steve Sullivan was another bright spot. And a defense with Boris Mironov, Bryan McCabe, Anders Eriksson, Brad Brown, Kevin Dean and newcomer Nolan Baumgartner could be very good. With Jocelyn Thibault in goal, it will have to be.

This night, Smith guaranteed a playoff spot. He also opened a line of communications never seen in Chicago.

You may be surprised when his new policy works, but I won't. In fact, other teams that owe their fans an apology could learn a lesson from Smith.

TSN

Senior writer Larry Wigge covers hockey for THE SPORTING NEWS. E-mail him at wigge@sportingnews.com.

FRONT OFFICE RUMBLINGS AND LOCKER ROOM WHISPERS FROM LARRY WIGGE

inside dish

Red Wings officials fear that rival Dallas will soon sign free-agent RW **Claude Lemieux**.

Why? Because another first- or second-line player can put the

Stars right back in the finals—especially a power forward like Lemieux, who has helped win four Stanley Cups. An insider says a team has been coming on strong in the Lemieux talks. Now we know that team is Dallas. ... Whispers say shiftier free-agent RW **Sergei Samsonov** has talked to so many other teams that he's going to force the Bruins to trade him in order to get the kind of money a former rookie of the year deserves. Samsonov, who had 22 and 25 goals in his first two NHL seasons, is being asked to take a cut after slumping to 19 goals. Sorry, but Samsonov's too talented to jerk around like that. ... Several G.M.s tell us not to expect the trade of **C Alexei Yashin** until December. That's when the Senators will be

able to get compensation close to Yashin's talent. Right now, they can't. ... So, the Islanders are going to increase their payroll from a league-low \$16 mil-

lion to about \$30 million. Why, then, argue about the \$2.5 million that **Kenny Jonsson**—the team's best defenseman—wants? ... **Felix Potvin** and **Bob Essensa**? A pretty good pair in goal and another reason to watch the Canucks in 2000-01. That's the fifth Western Conference team Essensa's signed with. Eastern teams—Ottawa and Pittsburgh come to mind—would have been wise to look harder at Essensa. ... After being outworked by Pittsburgh in the playoffs, the Capitals have added jujitsu to their training regimen. The exercises are designed to help with balance and avoid injuries. But defenseman are especially expected to gain from the instruction—in fighting off opponents in front of the net. Ayyyyyy-yah!



Dave D'Alessandro

Cap room could pay off for Bulls in September

Lately, we have all been subjected to a modified and tedious source of aggravation, and by this I am not referring to the Republican Party platform, but the persecution complex that

has entombed the average Chicago Bulls fan. Once upon a dynasty, we used to refer to it as arrogance: The world was theirs, the rest of us had to live in it. Now it's the righteous mewling of Bulls fanatics that they have somehow been wronged—either by Jerry Krause or by an NBA conspiracy or by the unfair perception by some free agents who happen to regard their great city as a wintry Chernobyl.

There is whining on the chat shows and consternation in the pubs. They've gone through stages of denial and stupefaction, passed through open rage, and now they're on their way to numbness. Where it stops, nobody knows. And all that background noise you're hearing is the rest of the NBA clucking its tongue in mock sympathy.

Once again, everything you thought you knew about free agency turns out to be dead, screeching wrong. Even in a buyers' market, some bring home an Edsel. Chicago was one of only three teams with significant cap room, but Tim Duncan, Grant Hill, Tracy McGrady, Rashard Lewis and Tim Thomas all turned down \$68 million offers from the Bulls—in roughly that order—with Eddie Jones likely to follow suit. So the Bulls are now looking at Ron Mercer as their best remaining option.

Why did this happen? A number of theories abound, and some of them have a modicum of validity. A lot is being said about how badly Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippen were treated while they were winning six titles, and while most of that is rubbish, the perception has stuck because these two debate-team champions claimed it to be true.

Maybe Jerry Reinsdorf hurt poor Michael's feelings with that impromptu remark about how he may come to regret the \$30 million contract he gave him in '97, and maybe Krause came off as an officious windbag when he said that organizations win titles. But these incidents do not exactly deserve a high ranking on the list of outrages that owners have inflicted on players in the NBA's long history.

"It's easy for everyone to generalize and say that they are not getting these guys because of this or that. I think each player makes his own specific reasons," Chicago-based agent Mark Bartelstein said of the Bulls' problem with enticing free agents. "I think Grant Hill's wife wanted to be in Florida. I think Tim Duncan felt a loyalty to stay in San Antonio. Everyone has different rea-



UH, HOW ABOUT HIM? The Bulls may have to settle for Mercer.

sons for why they do things. But I think that the people out there who say the Bulls haven't treated their players well are totally mistaken."

Similarly, the notion that the Bulls have wasted an entire offseason by keeping their money in their pockets is also misguided.

This market has been, to say the least, nothing like the last four. The dearth of teams with cap space made it a crashing bore: Free agency used to be about autonomy, leverage and financial windfall, but the current economic climate—with the luxury tax just one year away—has made everyone edgy, and there is a great reluctance to make sign-and-

trade transactions and take on the long-term contract of another team's player.

Even with their bankroll, the Bulls faced the same stifling circumstances. But they are better equipped to deal with them, whether their fans are willing to see it or not.

Remember this: Cap room is not just for signing free agents. When the desperate days of mid-September arrive, Krause will use it to be a trade broker and facilitate deals that other teams have to make. Right now, he has no choice but to wait, but time is on his side. Cap room doesn't go away unless you give it away, and he has no reason to give it to players he doesn't want. But if two teams want to make a deal, and the salaries don't match, Krause is on the sidelines and has the wherewithal to make the deal work, as long as you wet his beak with a live body that only he has room for.

And then there is the likelihood of a leaguewide squeeze, in which veterans will be scrounging for exception jobs and tell their agents to take a longer look at the Bulls. Krause will sign them to short-term deals, and next summer, he'll go back to the market.

You could put together a representative team that way. Perhaps the big makeover has been delayed, but the Bulls can still go short-term and preserve their options. Given their young nucleus, they should improve, and it won't take much to be a playoff contender in an increasingly wretched Central Division. The only downside to this is that Bulls fans may not have anything left to complain about.

TSN

Dave D'Alessandro covers the NBA for the Newark (N.J.) Star-Ledger. E-mail him at daved@sportingnews.com.

FRONT OFFICE RUMBLINGS AND LOCKER ROOM WHISPERS FROM DAVE D'ALESSANDRO

inside dish

As the free-agent signing period began, the only drama remaining was what SG **Eddie Jones** would do—and he decided to play hardball. EJ's attorney, **Leon Rose**, announced that if the Hornets didn't work out a sign-and-trade agreement with the Heat, Jones was ready to bolt—either to Chicago for big money or to the Heat for their middle-class exception. The \$2.25 million is all Miami can offer Jones in the absence of a sign-and-trade deal. Charlotte G.M. **Bob Bass** said he's prepared to let Jones bolt without compensation.

... **Arn Tellem** claims that client F **Tim Thomas** re-signed with Milwaukee because the Bucks promised him a starting position, which would imply that incumbent 3-man **Glenn Robinson** is on his way out. What says G.M. **Ernie Grunfeld**? "Glenn is an All-Star. I have not had one conversation with anyone about trading him." ...



BOB LEVERONE / TSN

C **Patrick Ewing**, who turns 38 this week, said that he wants to play three more seasons—which would be news but for the fact that the Knicks have always been under the impression that he wants to play until he's

80. Still, the New York City tabloids took that as an example of Ewing's arrogance and called for him to retire, be traded, or accept a public flogging. ... F **Maurice Taylor** stunned everyone—especially the Magic—by announcing that he will play for Orlando next year, even though G.M. **John Gabriel** didn't have a dime to give the free agent. "I had three agents call me and say, 'I thought you had no room. You want (Taylor) vs. mine?'" Gabriel said. "They were screaming at me. I told them I have no idea why he said what he said. I told them to put the phone to their ear, and I said, 'I've got \$200,000 left. If you want it, it's here.'"

Atlanta



GETTING BETTER: The Hawks have been pleased with the development of SG **Dion Glover**. He has committed the offseason to getting stronger and becoming a better perimeter shooter, and it has shown. Glover did not post big numbers in either of the two summer tournaments the Hawks participated in, but his movements on the court showed a comfort level that is encouraging. Glover likely will be playing behind starter **Jimmy Jackson**—unless Jackson goes back to small forward and rookie **DerMarr Johnson** starts at shooting guard, which could make it difficult for Glover to get playing time.

GETTING THE POINT: Scoonie Penn is making a good impression in the competition for backup point guard. Penn, for the most part, was poised in running the club in the Atlanta and Boston summer leagues. His decision-making and perimeter shooting are his best attributes. He's not particularly quick for his size (5-10), and his one-on-one defense is adequate at best. Penn plays hard and smart and knows the value of making his teammates content—when to feed the ball to his scorers and how to encourage his teammates without putting them on the defensive. —Curtis Bunn

Chicago



SLIM PICKINGS: How bad are the Bulls? Well, with the exception of PF **Elton Brand** and SG **Hersey Hawkins**, their best players under contract make up the club's summer league team, which started 1-3 in the Rocky Mountain Revue. That team features two first-round picks (**Marcus Fizer** and **Jamal Crawford**), **Ron Artest**, **Michael Ruffin** and two second-round picks (**Khalid El-Amin** and **A.J. Guyton**). ... If the Bulls don't sign a significant free agent, it would be devastating to the integrity and image of the team's management after it ended the club's dynasty two years too early and stockpiled \$20 million to go after the best free agents in a rebuilding campaign.

GOOD SIGN: Fizer sparked in his summer league debut (19 points in 32 minutes). After playing power forward in college, Fizer (6-8, 250) says he is ready to work on conditioning after the league and likely will lose some weight to help gain the mobility he thinks he will need at small forward. His 19-point debut was a welcome revelation because coach **Tim Floyd**, despite his fondness for good defenders, needs scorers—the Bulls were last in scoring the last two seasons (81.9 points in 1998-99 and 84.8 this past season). —Lacy J. Banks

Indiana



GETTING STARTED: It's too soon to know exactly how coach **Isiah Thomas** wants to play and where he sees the many and multifaceted pieces of his puzzle fitting. But it's clear he'll take a more assertive approach than his predecessor, **Larry Bird**. "A lot of the teaching we will be doing will be about being a better basketball player and a smarter basketball player, how to out-think the opponent, how to mentally wear him down as opposed to physically wearing him down," Thomas says. It will be difficult to keep everyone happy, but Thomas sounds prepared to throw open the doors and see who rushes in.

FINDING HIS WAY: Last season, SF **Al Harrington** (6-9, 254) had a great training camp and scored in double figures in eight of the first nine games. Then he dropped off dramatically. His descent started with the normal growing pains for a second-year player, a gradual loss of confidence from the coaches, a loss of confidence from Harrington, a weight gain that resulted from room-service meals and a back injury. Harrington has star quality, with plenty of raw athletic ability and enthusiasm. He is caught in a crowded field of small forwards and must improve his perimeter shot. More than anything, he needs experience. —Mark Montieth

Boston



GOOD START: PF **Jerome Moiso** was drafted in part because of his athletic ability, and he showed that he has a lot of that. In four summer league appearances, Moiso was fluid at both ends, demonstrated he could play **Rick Pitino's** press and was productive around the basket at both ends. He has long arms and showed a proficiency at both rebounding and shot blocking—two Celtics weaknesses. He has decent range for his size (6-11) and can play with his back to the basket. His biggest hurdles will be overcoming his passivity and bulking up. Everyone who saw him came away impressed. ... **C Mark Blount** also is likely to make the team. He looks to be no more than a third-string center, but he did show an affinity for shot blocking, which helps.

SHOPPING TRIP: Pitino is spending time in California going after SG **Tariq Abdul-Wahad**. It remains to be seen whether even his legendary powers of persuasion can overcome his team's lack of money and lack of promise and lure him from Denver. The team is looking for a defensive-minded guard, and Abdul-Wahad is that. **G Chris Herren** is another target. He grew up in Massachusetts. And a deal involving **F Austin Croshere** is still circulating in the rumor mill. —Peter May

Cleveland



KNIGHT SHIFT: PG **Brevin Knight** finished 13th in the NBA in assists last year at 7.0 per game. On the surface, that's a positive sign, but the other aspects of Knight's game suffered. He averaged 9.3 points, 3.0 rebounds and 1.65 steals and shot 41.2 percent from the field and 20 percent from the 3-point line. Early in the season, Knight appeared finally to get over the hurdle of hitting his outside shots. Many teams leave him alone near the 3-point arc and dare him to shoot. Largely because of his inability to score from the perimeter and his lack of size, he lost his starting job to **Andre Miller**. If Knight is retained, he likely will be coming off the bench.

HE CAN PLAY: An interesting player on the Cavs' summer roster is PF **Terquin Mott** (6-8, 245). He spearheaded Coppin State's upset of South Carolina in the NCAA Tournament a few years ago and has been playing in Spain. "He reminds me of **Grant Long**," coach **Randy Wittman** says. "He's a bit undersized but knows how to play." ... Because there has been no contact between the Cavs and PF **Danny Ferry**, it appears his 10-year career with the team is done. With an overload of power forwards, there's no room for Ferry. His shooting ability will land him a job. —Bob Finnan

Miami



STILL AN ASSET: SG **Dan Majerle** remains a valued member of the rotation, and there was no doubt his option would be picked up because the team will be over the salary cap next season. But the team must scale back his role to get more of an offensive-minded presence in the lineup. In a perfect world, Majerle returns as a sixth man counted on for minutes at small forward and shooting guard. Majerle's savvy is critical for a team with playoff visions. Having twice reinvented himself, first from Thunder Dan the dunking machine to a 3-point shooter and then from an offensive force to a defensive mainstay, there is little doubting his ability to provide at least one significant asset every time he steps on the court.

SHAPING UP: PG **Tim Hardaway** has begun an extensive workout plan with a personal trainer, and coach **Pat Riley** has said free-agent negotiations with Hardaway cannot begin until the team is convinced he can regain his health. For Hardaway, that makes strides over the next month critical. ... PG **Anthony Carter**, who had a solid rookie season, apparently will forgo greater riches elsewhere to stay with the team. With Hardaway's future uncertain, Carter likely will receive significant time, even if it's in a reserve role. —Ira Winderman

Charlotte



EDDIE TO L.A.? There are a lot of rumors regarding possible destinations for SG **Eddie Jones**, but the one that makes the most sense for the club could essentially be a do-over of the March 1999 trade that brought Jones to Charlotte. The Hornets would send Jones and troubled **F Anthony Mason** to the Lakers for SF **Glen Rice** and either **F Rick Fox** or PG **Derek Fisher**. The Hornets clearly would prefer Fox because they already have more point guards than minutes available. The deal matches up salary cap-wise and is probably a better one than they could get out of Miami.

MOVING UP: SF **Eddie Robinson** (6-9) was a pleasant surprise as a rookie last season, averaging 7 points and 2.7 rebounds in 67 games. After he had some big games in December, he worked his way into the rotation by midseason and was a significant contributor throughout the second half. He clearly has overtaken **Ricky Davis** as the young wing player the team would like to develop most. He is an explosive offensive player with great leaping ability and a soft jump shot. Robinson should definitely be in the rotation this season and under certain circumstances could even be in the starting lineup. —Darin Gantt

Detroit



BELIEVE THE HYPE: Despite perfunctory denials, the team is involved in talks for a four-team deal that would bring SG **Allen Iverson** and **C Matt Geiger** to Detroit. The proposed move would cost the Pistons **Fs Jerry Stackhouse**, **Jerome Williams** and **Christian Laettner**. Team president **Joe Dumars** would pull the trigger in a heartbeat. First, he would give up one starter for two. Second, Iverson would not only replace SF **Grant Hill's** production on the court, he would surpass Hill's box-office appeal. Iverson might fit in better in Motown than in Philly, and he has a deep respect for Dumars. Plus, coach **George Irvine** has a reputation for getting along with "trouble" players. ... A player like PG **John Crotty**—a backup point guard who is good enough to run the team in the fourth quarter—is on nearly every team's wish list. Nonetheless, his release by the Pistons will leave him looking for his seventh team in nine years.

TIME SHARE: The Pistons expect Magic free agent **Chuck Atkins** and rookie **Mateen Cleaves** to share the point. That means **Lindsey Hunter** likely will be gone before training camp. ... Dumars gave up trying to lure PFs **Brian Grant** and **Austin Croshere**. —Chris McCoskey

Milwaukee



FATHER FIGURE: PF **Tim Thomas** says he will re-sign with the Bucks, and one of the reasons he gave is that he has become close to coach **George Karl**. In fact, Thomas says Karl has become "like a father" to him. Thomas, who started only one game last season, could start opposite **Glenn Robinson** in 2000-2001 or come off the bench as the sixth man. With the re-signing of Thomas and the additions of **Jason Caffey** and **Billy Owens** from Golden State, the Bucks certainly will have depth at forward. ... Rookie SG **Michael Redd** was selected to the all-tournament team in the Shaw's Pro Summer League in Boston. It was a memorable tourney for Redd, who signed his first NBA contract in midtournament and proceeded to lead the Bucks' entry in scoring at 15.0 ppg over six games.

FALLOUT AT FORWARD: The Bucks would like to re-sign PFs **Darvin Ham** and **Scott Williams**, both of whom played well last season. The additions of Caffey and Owens, however, might affect whether Ham and Williams can be re-signed. Meanwhile, **Danny Manning's** agent told the Bucks Manning will buy out the last year of his contract and become a free agent. The Jazz is said to be interested. —Gregg Hoffman

New Jersey



FILLING A SPOT: The club's interest in SG **Ron Mercer** is a little hard to fathom at first because with PG **Stephen Marbury** and SF **Keith Van Horn** around, the club doesn't need a "scorer" like Mercer as much as a "shooter." A scorer might clog the lanes Marbury and Van Horn are looking to use as the shot clock winds down. A shooter can hover on the perimeter, drawing traffic away from the paint or getting open for a 3-pointer. The club must choose between Mercer's superior scoring ability and **Kendall Gill's** superior defense.

ANOTHER CHANCE: **Byron Scott's** hiring may benefit PG **Elliot Perry**, who seemed to lose **Don Casey's** confidence for much of last season. Perry averaged 13.4 points and 4.1 assists in 30.7 minutes in 10 April games. Those games accounted for nearly 40 percent of his playing time. The Nets lost all 10 games—Perry started the last five. Injuries to several key players didn't make it a fair test, but Perry's limitations were apparent. He struggles to defend bigger players—his quick hands can't make up for his lack of size (6-0). He can run a fast break fairly well, but he isn't very strong in handling a halfcourt offense. He likely will battle **Sherman Douglas** to back up Marbury. —*John Brennan*

Philadelphia



WHAT A RUMOR: The biggest question facing the franchise—What will happen to SG **Allen Iverson**?—could be answered soon with the NBA moratorium on trades now lifted. Although the 76ers have managed to keep Iverson's name out of the rumor mill for the better part of the summer, a wild, four-team scenario became public last week. That deal had Iverson, disappointing C **Matt Geiger** and SF **Toni Kukoc**, who failed to live up to his billing—especially in the playoffs—being shipped out of town for All-Star free-agent SG **Eddie Jones**, PF **Jerome Williams** and sharpshooting SF **Glen Rice**. Many pieces would have to fall into place for the deal to happen, but it would certainly change the face of the team.

REAL LIFE: A couple of productive weeks on the court turned tragic off it for C **Nazr Mohammed**, whose father, **Alhaji**, was murdered in his Chicago auto parts store July 24. After a slow start in the Shaw's Pro Summer League, Mohammed came on strong and finished at 14.0 ppg and 6.7 rpg. A trade involving Geiger could be one of the best things that could happen to Mohammed, who likely will get squeezed out of a roster spot unless a big man is moved. —*Jon Marks*

Dallas



ALL THE RIGHT MOVES: Second-round pick **Eduardo Najera's** hustle and smarts are giving the summer league coaches all the reason they need for him to win a roster spot. The scrappy forward was among college leaders in diving for loose balls during his career at Oklahoma, and he isn't backing down against the pros. But there's more to winning a spot in an NBA rotation than floor burns. At 6-8, Najera is a classic 'tweener. Is he a power forward or a small forward? Is he rugged enough to muscle his way inside? Is he quick enough to drive and get off his shot against athletic forwards? Those questions will be addressed in the exhibition season.

THANKS, BUT: Owner **Mark Cuban** has given the Clippers permission to talk to assistant **Del Harris** about their head coaching job, but Harris apparently has little interest and likely will return to **Don Nelson's** staff. Harris will make about as much with the Mavericks as he would with the Clippers, and he wouldn't have to work for **Donald Sterling**. ...The team is shopping for a veteran backup big man. If it is unable to get someone, it may go into the season with **Etan Thomas** and **Gary Trent** splitting minutes as the reserve center. —*Ken Sims*

New York



HOLDING THE FORT: It was fun to fantasize about a Knicks lineup including SF **Grant Hill** or PF **Brian Grant**, but reality dictates that the Knicks concentrate on signing their own valuable free agent—PF **Kurt Thomas**. The team's main competition for Thomas is the Lakers, who are hungry to upgrade the position. The Lakers can offer the midlevel exception while the Knicks can sign their "early Bird" free agent for a starting salary of \$3.93 million and a maximum of six years. But if Thomas is willing to take a one-year risk, he could take the Lakers' midlevel exception for one season, then sign a long-term deal in 2001, when it will start at \$4.4 million. That's virtually equal to what he could make in the second year with the Knicks, and future raises with either team would be identical.

TOUGH CALL: Of all the reports of possible sign-and-trade deals that could bring Grant to the Knicks, the most intriguing one would send SG **Allan Houston** to Portland in exchange for Grant and G **Bonzi Wells**. But the team would be giving up an All-Star and Olympian in the prime of his career. Houston shot a career-high 48.3 percent last season, and his team-leading 19.7 scoring average tied his career high. —*Greg Logan*

Toronto



FIRST CHOICE: F **Austin Croshere** appears to be the top acquisition the Raptors would like to make now that August 1 has arrived. The Raptors are still hot on acquiring G **Cuttino Mobley**, and 6-10 C **Rashard Lewis** and PG **Howard Easley** are not out of the picture. However it is 6-9 Croshere whom the Raptors have zeroed in on. He has a nice touch from the outside for a big player, averaging more than 10 points a game despite playing beside SG **Reggie Miller** and SF **Jalen Rose**. Croshere's agent, **Dan Fagan**, met with G.M. **Glen Grunwald** last week, and they have been talking since. The Raptors have more than \$6 million in cap space available. ... It does not look like the Raptors have any hope of signing PG **Anthony Carter**.

BOGUES FAN CLUB: When push came to shove in the playoffs, coach **Butch Carter** made the controversial decision to replace PG **Doug Christie** with 5-3 **Muggsy Bogues**. The reason was simple: Bogues has a true point guard's instincts, and the team's offense had far better flow when he was in the game. He made such a valuable contribution that SF **Vince Carter** has been lobbying the Raptors' front office to re-sign Bogues to another contract. —*Craig Daniels*

Denver



STICKING AROUND: SG **Bryant Stith** is in the last year of his contract and has been dangled as trade bait, but for now it looks like he is going to be with the Nuggets this season. Stith couldn't get off the bench much of last season. He played well when he was given the opportunity. Then, he got injured—that has been Stith's story the last four seasons. When healthy, he is an excellent defender and a smart offensive player. He gets to the foul line, and he improved his field-goal shooting last season, hitting 45.5 percent, his best mark since 1994-95, when he shot 47.2 percent. He also has 3-point range. Stith works well posting up opposing guards and can play with his back to the basket.

SUMMER FUN: Through four summer league games, the Nuggets were 3-1. The only loss came after PG **Chris Herren** missed a free throw that would have forced overtime. ... Rookie C **Mamadou N'diaye** has not been impressive in the summer league. He did not score or grab a rebound in the league opener. After scoring 10 points and collecting six rebounds in the team's loss, he has been rather invisible. If the Rocky Mountain Revue is any indication, N'diaye is a long way from helping the team. —*Michael BeDan*

Orlando



TAKE TWO: The team's success last season obviously upgraded the value of free agents PF **Ben Wallace** and PG **Chuck Atkins**. At the same time, the organization's success in getting commitments from SF **Grant Hill** and SG **Tracy McGrady** hindered its ability to get Wallace to re-sign. Wallace and Atkins agreed to sign with the Pistons. The Magic probably will sign **Dee Brown** to replace Atkins but may have a hard time finding another workhorse like Wallace. ... **Maurice Taylor** would like to be Wallace's replacement, but he would have to swallow some pride to make it happen. Taylor, trying to escape the Clippers, said last week he was going to sign with the Magic. But there is nothing left for him unless he signs for the minimum of \$500,000.

NOT WELCOME: Conspicuously missing from any free-agent discussions this summer has been SG **Ron Mercer**. Orlando has made no effort to re-sign Mercer, who wanted to come back. Mercer couldn't live down his reputation as a selfish offensive player and was ineffective in the role of scorer for Orlando, especially in the fourth quarter of close games. The only mention management has made of him is his possible inclusion in sign-and-trade deals. —*Bill Fay*

Washington



COMING BACK: The team and third-year C **Jahidi White** expect to come to terms soon on a multiyear deal that would average nearly \$4.5 million a year. There has been significant interest in White, mostly by Western Conference teams, but none has more than the \$2.25 million exception to offer. ... It's possible F **Aaron Williams**, who opted out of his contract, could return if the Wizards' exception is more than he can get elsewhere. If the team uses the exception on a power forward/center, **Juwan Howard** likely will return to small forward, where he hates playing. If it uses the exception on a small forward, it likely will bring back versatile big man **Gerard King** at a minimum salary.

COMING BACK BETTER: C **Calvin Booth** looked impressive in the Shaw's Pro Summer League, blocking 14 shots in six games, including five in one game. Booth averaged 12 points and six rebounds and showed the promise management hoped for last season. Booth, a 6-11 lefty, spent most of last year in the weight room and got much stronger. Booth played some in the final three weeks and showed far more athletic ability and aggressiveness than most of his teammates thought he had. He is pegged as White's backup. —*Steve Wyche*

Golden State



THREE-WHEELING: They brought in SG **Larry Hughes** from Philadelphia in a three-team trade. They acquired SG **Bob Sura** from Cleveland in another. But G.M. **Garry St. Jean** and assistant **Gary Fitzsimmons** will need all of that ingenuity and more to clinch a deal for Celtics PF **Danny Fortson**. The team appears to be the front-runner for Fortson, 24, who enjoyed a visit last week. The capped-out Warriors seem willing to meet his demands for a seven-year contract expected to be worth \$35 million to \$40 million, but finding a third team to broker the trade between them and Boston is the challenge. The realistic options are the Clippers and Bulls, who have salary-cap space, and the Pacers and Rockets, who have trade exceptions worth more than \$4 million.

LEAD ROLE: At 39, PF **Terry Cummings** is the best post-up player on the roster. He still can score on the low block and serve as a viable source of offense for short stretches. But he could be lost in a Forstson deal. Regardless of what Cummings contributes in terms of points, rebounds and minutes, he embraces his team captain role and could have a future on a team's bench or in a front office after he retires. —*Brad Weinstein*

Houston



GETTING CLOSE: As of last weekend, the club hadn't reached an agreement with SG **Cuttino Mobley**, but the two sides were close. Sources close to the negotiations say he has made it clear he wants to return to

the team rather than bolt for Toronto. The Raptors had been wooing Mobley with regular phone calls from **Vince Carter** and assurances from coach **Lenny Wilkens** that Mobley would have the ball in his hands often. But Mobley apparently knew he was not going to enjoy the offensive freedom he enjoyed in the Rockets' scheme.

EARLY RETURNS: Rookie SF **Dan Langhi** has impressed the club with his ability to hit the outside shot. He rolled up some big games at the Rocky Mountain Revue. Unlike **Matt Bullard**, another outside-shooting big man, Langhi has shown the ability to drive and get to the free-throw line, two skills that could play a vital part in the offense. Though many defenders appear to expect a Bullard-like game from him, Langhi surprises them with his quickness and driving ability. He needs to work on his defense because the simplest pump-fakes send him flying for phantom blocks. But that will come. Langhi appears to have great footwork, so he is rarely off-balance on defense. —*Michael Murphy*

Minnesota



TOP CHOICE: The team's most critical need is at shooting guard, and **Chauncey Billups** emerged as the target. He was the only shooting guard to visit the Target Center, and Billups seemed pleased with what he

saw and heard. ... The team has another, smaller salary exemption it will try to use for a forward/center who can add size and depth on the front line. C **Will Perdue** visited, but he also is talking to other teams. ... As expected, the team advised PG **Igor Rakosevic**, the 51st pick in the draft, to continue his career in Europe. Rakosevic would like to sign with the Wolves, but that's a long shot. The team doesn't need another point guard—and doesn't want to add a rookie to an already young team—unless it trades **Terrell Brandon** or **William Avery** takes over as the starter.

CRITICAL COMPONENT: PF **Tom Hammonds**, an 11-year veteran, started slowly, but he is critical to the team because of the hard-working example he sets. He isn't afraid to show his temper, especially if foes get rough with SF **Kevin Garnett**. Hammonds, who is signed through the 2001-02 season, won't score much, but he's the club's strongest man, a solid rebounder, and he helps set the tone for the team. —*John Millea*

Sacramento



LOOKING GOOD: Rookie **Jabari Smith** has been a somewhat pleasant find. Smith certainly is skilled for his size (6-11)—his skills and style are more suited for a small forward than a power player. His ballhandling is good for a big man, and he's an excellent and willing passer. His

strength is facing the basket and attacking the offense. Smith's most dangerous move appears to be a jab step followed by a jump shot. He shows no inclination to work with his back to the basket; creating that portion of his game will be one of the club's first goals.

ANOTHER CHANCE: PG **Darrick Martin** began last season as **Jason Williams'** backup. In March, Martin lost the job to **Tony Delk** and fell out of the rotation. Martin did not handle the demotion well and had thought of leaving. But Martin will return, and because Delk is leaving for the Suns, Martin again could play an important role. He is a streaky shooter and is capable of big scoring games. But his true value is as a playmaker with the club's explosive second unit. If Martin focuses more on finding his teammates and looks less for his shot, he can be a valuable commodity. He can shoot 3-pointers and is capable of penetrating defenses and finding open perimeter players. —*Marty McNeal*

L.A. Clippers



TIME TO STEP UP: C **Michael Olowokandi**, the first overall pick of the '98 draft, realizes this may be the most important time of his short basketball career. Sometimes he dominates centers like

Dikembe Mutumbo and **Rik Smits**. But most of the time, he struggles with foul trouble. This summer, he has started working out with a private trainer. After getting outworked for much of his first two seasons, he seems to be ready to apply himself. The Clippers have not given up on Olowokandi, but they are prepared to sit him if he goes into a funk again. Improved conditioning will help Olowokandi, who still has the potential to become a solid player. ... PG **Jeff McInnis** and C/F **Brian Skinner** were the team's two most consistent players in the Long Beach Summer Pro League.

BLENDING IN: It will be interesting to see how SG **Eric Piatkowski** blends with the new young players, who do not have reputations as passers. He is an excellent outside shooter, but he needs help to be effective. He was lost when teammates played one on one, a dominant aspect of last season's offense. Is Piatkowski's limited role as a shooter vital enough to keep him? The club will take offers for him because it seems to think he will be the odd man out. —*Lonnie White*

Phoenix



DAN'S THE MAN: The Suns are expected to sign 7-1 C **Daniel Santiago** to a free-agent minimum contract. Santiago impressed the club in the Utah Rocky Mountain Revue summer league. His addition to the roster could spell the

end of C **Oliver Miller's** second stint with the Suns. ... The club has been impressed by the play of undrafted rookie **Justin Love**, even though he's small (6-2) for a shooting guard. His chances of making the team might have been hurt by the addition of **Tony Delk**. Both players can play either guard position.

KIDD AT PLAY: PG **Jason Kidd** finally is recovered from an ankle fracture that required surgery late last season. With a healthy lineup, Kidd won't have to carry the offense as he often did when SG **Penny Hardaway** was hurt last year. A terrific defender, ballhandler and passer, Kidd must continue to develop his jump shot. He is a good enough 3-point shooter, but he could benefit by developing a good midrange touch. When Kidd is hitting those shots, teams must play him honestly on the screen-and-roll, opening opportunities for others. He also needs to be more selfish. Sometimes he's so intent on getting everyone else involved he passes up easy chances of his own. —*Bob Young*

San Antonio



DUNCAN UPDATE: PF **Tim Duncan**, who underwent surgery to repair a cartilage tear in his left knee after the season, recently started his rehabilitation work. Spurs

coach **Gregg Popovich** says he has been pleased with Duncan's progress. Duncan, however, had yet to start planting and cutting side to side on the knee. "He's doing great," Popovich says. "We don't want him to push himself too hard, too fast." ... Popovich says USA Basketball has not given the team a date for Duncan to commit to playing in the Olympics. The U.S. team begins training camp on August 24 in Hawaii. ... The Spurs this season will need even more than they have gotten in the past from Duncan if they hope to improve their results. The club's perimeter game looks spotty, and **Sean Elliott's** retirement plans are undecided, so Duncan again may play spot minutes at small forward. His outside shooting has improved each season, and he looks more comfortable handling double-teams.

SCOUTING REPORT: Popovich says he has been pleased with the performances of G **Derrick Dial**, free-agent G **Raja Bell** and free-agent C **Shawnelle Scott**. Dial was a rookie with the Spurs last season; Bell and Scott spent last season in the CBA. —*Johnny Ludden*

L.A. Lakers



NOW WE'RE TALKING: Now that the team can talk about trading SF **Glen Rice**, the most likely deal would be with the 76ers for SF **Toni Kukoc**. Coach **Phil Jackson** wants someone who can run the triangle, and **Larry Brown** wants a shooter. Neither Rice nor Kukoc would command much more on the open market than he made last year.

GOING SMALL? **Robert Horry** is a far cry from the young Rocket who was compared to **Scottie Pippen** when Houston won back-to-back titles in 1994-95. Horry was a double-figures scorer with 3-point range and a major shot blocker for a small forward. Horry's confidence and game deteriorated after he was traded to the Suns and then to the Lakers, who gave him a long-term deal and tried to make him a power forward. But with Jackson drilling him to take his shot, Horry pushed his average to 8.0 in March and contributed in the playoffs. Jackson doesn't see him as the answer at power forward but may play him at small forward. ... The team desperately needs a power forward. Orlando's **John Amaechi** already has said no, leaving New York's **Kurt Thomas** and Charlotte's **Anthony Mason** as the top targets. —*Mark Heisler*

Portland



DISAPPOINTING SUMMER: The players who were supposed to be the keys to the summer league team—F/C **Jermaine O'Neal** and SG **Bonzi Wells**—didn't come through the way the coaches and front office planned. O'Neal pulled out at the

last minute. He is upset with his lack of playing time and wants to be traded. Wells was in and out of the summer lineup for various reasons. He arrived with some rust and never was consistent with his outside shooting. Wells seemed more content to get his teammates involved. The offense began with rookie PG **Erick Barkley**, and most of the outside shots went to free agents G **Damon Jones** and F **Jamel Thomas**.

MAKING HIS CASE: Jones' spirit and shooting ability have kept the team's interest. Jones (6-3) was the leading scorer and 3-point threat on the summer team. He was dangerous on the fast break, showed some ability to handle the ball and run the offense and made some plays on defense, which is not his forte. He has the instant offense that could be of value coming off the bench, and his attitude always seems upbeat. His 'tweener size could be a drawback, but any team looking for someone who can create and spot up for shots would have to consider him. —*Steve Brandon*

Seattle



RELIEF: Last week, SF **Rashard Lewis** ended the free-agent courting—and the team's nervousness—with an oral commitment to re-sign. Lewis has a strong relationship with assistant coaches **Dwane Casey** and **Nate**

McMillan, both of whom he credits with his development. And despite the interest from other teams, Lewis cited Casey and McMillan as factors in returning to Seattle. "I could see myself playing in Seattle the rest of my career," Lewis says. In deciding to re-sign, Lewis turned down a lucrative offer from Toronto. ... **Sam Perkins** is one of several big men the team has contacted for its \$1.2 million exception. But the free agent—who was mulling retirement—was expected to re-sign with Indiana for one season.

HE'S WORKING ON IT: The only negative of the recruiting, Lewis says, was that it prevented him from playing with Seattle's summer league team most of last month. In only two days of playing, Lewis showed he already had improved on his main weakness: ballhandling. This summer, Lewis played at Houston's Westside Tennis Center, where several pros play during the offseason. Lewis also needs to improve on shooting off the dribble and posting up. —*Nunyo Demasio*

Utah



LOOKING GOOD: SG DeShawn Stevenson has been surprisingly impressive in his summer league games, considering he's 19 and just finished high school. He has shown a variety of offensive moves, outstanding athletic ability and a nice touch on midrange jumpers and 3-pointers. Perhaps most impressive, he has passed the ball well, averaging five assists in his first four games. ... Fs Quincy Lewis and Scott Padgett haven't played as well in summer games. Coach Jerry Sloan seems particularly upset at Padgett, who didn't return in great shape.

THE NEW NO. 2: Bryon Russell, now that Jeff Hornacek is gone, will be the No. 2 option behind PF Karl Malone in the offense. Russell has been a solid contributor for the Jazz the last four seasons. He has been the team's most prolific 3-point shooter and one of the few who has one-on-one ability to break down an opponent. Last season, he averaged a career-best 14.1 points. But Russell is inconsistent; he will score 26 points one night and 4 the next. The Jazz needs him to be a veteran leader who is more steady. Russell (6-7) is a small forward, but he may have to play some minutes each night at shooting guard. He doesn't have the ballhandling ability or the passing skills to be the full-time starter at guard. Russell is one of the team's top defenders. He usually goes up against the opponent's best offensive player. —Loren Jorgensen

Vancouver



BIG CHANCE: C Bryant Reeves, despite weight and conditioning problems that have plagued him, is a talented offensive player whose limitations on defense can be overcome if he remains an integral part of the team's offensive strategy. Last season, however, Reeves averaged only 24.1 minutes a game after Lionel Hollins took over as head coach in December. Depending on the depth of defensive upgrades the team makes this offseason—adding rookie PF Stromile Swift in the draft was a good start—Reeves might be able to stay on the floor longer and have more support defensively. Reeves will try to rediscover the go-to moves—a baseline turnaround jumper and a jump hook—he showcased during his first few seasons in the NBA. He hopes his time as a secondary scoring option is finished.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS: In only two games in the Rocky Mountain Revue summer league, Swift provided confirmation of his ability to be a shot-blocking force and a defensive frontcourt presence. Swift was credited with six blocks in the two games, but more important, coach Sidney Lowe saw his willingness to throw himself into the fray. He averaged 22.5 minutes a game. ... G Mustapha Sonko, 28, came off the bench and turned heads with 11 assists, seven points, five rebounds and two steals in one of the games. Perhaps he will receive an invitation to camp in October. —Howard Tsumura

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Dave Kindred

Root, hog or die

Across the land is now heard poor-mouth whimpering from fans of bad baseball teams. Their voices lifted in pouting unison, they cry out, "Oh, the competitive imbalance."

Such is the epidemic of despair that should a window be raised, one hears on the breeze the mournful lamentation, "If only they would give us some of the Yankees' and Braves' money, we, too, could win a World Series and hold our heads high." One slams shut the window.

The way to have the Yankees' and Braves' money is to be as smart as the Yankees and Braves. Hire the best people, pay them the best money and demand they do the best work. If you can't do that, you should expect to be less than the best. Then, having worked your way down to the level of your competence, do not dare to whimper, whine, pout and sulk. Do not go to a street corner, hat in hand, whispering, "Alms, sir, alms."

Get your butt off the corner and go to work.

Ask not for rich folks' money.

Earn your own.

Ah, yes, you say, that's good advice, only it's impossible. You say the Yankees get all that local television money that gives them a war chest so large they can buy a Sammy Sosa or a Juan Gonzalez. You say it's unfair that the New York market is so much larger than Milwaukee's, and there's no way the Brewers can compete.

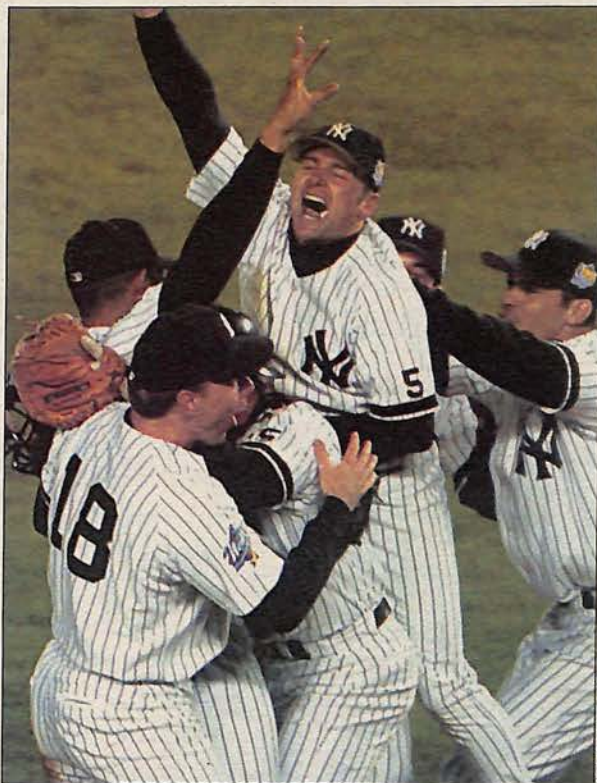
Look at the NFL, you say, where the Packers and Giants compete on an even basis because the league's teams share revenues. The result is a competitive balance so well calibrated it's possible for any team to win. Look at the most recent Super Bowl, for there we saw the long-downtrodden Rams meet the wandering-homeless Titans, proof certain that shared revenue is the way to go.

Well. We might argue. Who says a Rams-Titans Super Bowl is a good thing? Might not such a meeting be the sad consequence of enforced mediocrity, the dumbing-down of dynasties? One need not be a football genius, or even Terry Bradshaw, to recognize that the Rams and Titans, the NFL's best, are pale facsimiles of the Steelers, Cowboys, Redskins and 49ers, who made the Super Bowl worth watching.

Good heavens, the Falcons were in a Super Bowl the year before, and the Falcons for 30 years were as miserable an organization as professional sports ever has abided. Had the Falcons been a shoe store, they'd have stocked only left-footed shoes in orange and red leathers. They'd have been in bankruptcy court before printing up their business cards.

Shared revenues enabled the Falcons to prosper, perhaps making even more money than teams burdened with the costs of traveling to playoff games. The NFL guarantees the survival of the least fit.

Now comes major league baseball, in the form of a Blue Ribbon panel on economics, saying that revenues must be shared. This is sad evidence that even baseball's pooh-bahs don't appreciate what they have. If it's merit we're



GOOD BUSINESS: The Yankees have worked hard to be on top. Teams that don't make smart decisions don't deserve to share their wealth.

The irony is, the Braves are now regarded as one of the reasons there must be revenue sharing when their history demonstrates that revenue sharing is not necessary to transform mediocrity into excellence.

measuring—and isn't sports the purest meritocracy we have?—baseball ought to congratulate itself for forcing its clubs to be good or suffer the consequences.

If a George Steinbrenner, say, can figure a way to make \$100 million a year from local television sales, the Expos can find a way to make more than they now do—which is not a dime. The Expos' failure has nothing to do with the size of their market; it has everything to do with bad business, beginning with the placement of a baseball franchise in a city which for 50 years has given short shrift to baseball. Why, pray tell, should the Yankees work hard to build excellence if that work rewards people who have no idea how to do it on their own?

As for the idea that mediocre teams have no chance to be competitive with the megabucks Yankees and Braves, let's consider a time not long ago when a certain baseball team was as bad as a team could be.

The year was 1990. The team had finished last in its division three straight years, once losing 106 games. For six years, it had averaged 96 losses a season; it last was over .500 in 1983. It had spent lavishly, by the standards of the 1980s, but not well. Only a couple years or so earlier, the team president had said, "We've got the highest payroll in baseball and the worst record. Seems to me, we're doing this backwards."

So the very smart president hired very smart baseball lifers who cut the payroll, expanded the farm system through

America and the Dominican Republic, hired scouts and signed free agents to fit roles. The very next year, 1991, that team went to the World Series, and in the years since, it has won seven straight division championships, four more league championships and one World Series.

Yes, Atlanta. And, yes, the Braves have Ted Turner's television networks. They have, yes, the megabucks with which to keep their free agents and sign more. They have the glitzy new ballpark necessary to create local revenues.

But y'know what? Atlanta didn't always have the megabucks and the stadium and players who know how to win. Those things followed from intelligent decisions that can be made by anyone anywhere with similar results. To whine about competitive imbalance is to make excuses for losing.

The irony is, the Braves are now regarded as one of the reasons there must be revenue sharing when their history demonstrates that revenue sharing is not necessary to transform mediocrity into excellence.

What's necessary is that you be smart and work hard. Once upon a time, that was called the American way. **TSN**

Dave Kindred is a contributing writer for THE SPORTING NEWS. Look for additional commentary from Dave weekdays at sportingnews.com and on AOL (keyword: TSN).

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